

Religion in the Irish Education System.

THE IRISH
**ANARCHIST
REVIEW**

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ISSUE #9, SUMMER 2014

Communism or Capitalism,

Life or Death...

IAR #9

*An End to
Growth?*

Fracking Hell

*Disaster
Communism*

Editorial:

Welcome to the Irish Anarchist Review # 9

We've been hearing scare stories about the damage being done to the environment by CO2 emissions for decades now. Terms like "climate change", "greenhouse effect", "the ozone layer" (more importantly, the holes in the ozone layer) and "global warming", are part of everyday language. We know that the polar ice caps are melting, causing sea levels to rise and we know that the weather is doing crazy things in parts of the world that are usually temperate. And, we know that all this is being caused by the stuff we produce and how we produce it. What has our response been?

By and large, we've done nothing. In fact we've done the opposite. We've continued to create stuff. More and more stuff. We produce enough food to feed the world at least twice over and a third of it is wasted. We produce gadgets we don't really need, war machines to subjugate people, we plan obsolescence so that we have to keep producing things to replace other things so that the wheels of the global economy keep turning and profit keeps accumulating. Billions of humans, across the planet, spend a large chunk of every day, doing things they'd prefer not to produce things they don't need in a process that is making the planet unfit for their habitation.

That sounds crazy, doesn't it? Yet that is life on planet Earth in the year 2014. It's not some dystopian science fiction yarn, it's real life. Why is it so? We are so distracted by reproducing ourselves at an individual level and at the level of the family unit, that we put these things in the back of our minds. We hope that someone else will fix things, or believe that somewhere, something is being done that will turn things around in the future.

We laughed when Homer Simpson, responding to Li-

sa's warning about the planet destroying comet said "Lisa, the whole reason we have elected officials is so we don't have to think all the time. Just like that rain forest scare a few years back. Our officials saw there was a problem and they fixed it, didn't they?", but the reality is that we were laughing at ourselves and our feeling of overwhelming helplessness in the face of power and forces that are greater than our individual selves.

The response of the left has, on the whole, been no better. The desperate call for growth, sometimes preceded with the word "green", is as good as throwing our hands up in the air and hoping a saviour will come. The worst thing about it, is that the left should know better.

The radical left knows that the problem is capitalism, claims the solution is a socialist society based upon the maxim "from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs", yet continues to parrot the slogans of the last century. The philosophy of a time when we did need to increase production to meet the needs of all are no longer relevant, when the means to create a post-scarcity society are at our fingertips, and have been for decades.

The environmental lobby on the other hand has largely attempted to shame capitalism into greening itself, into being less destructive. It is akin to trying to convince a shark not to be a predator. The logic of capitalism is that profit is the motor force of history, that growth creates profit, therefore profit is good.

We clearly need a new politics. We need a politics that can speak to billions of people whose lives are being turned upside down by changes in the global climate, in the way that the politics of the left was

able to speak to billions one hundred years ago. We need to think about organising to not just to radically restructure society from the bottom up, but also to prepare to materially face these changes.

This issue of the Irish Anarchist Review attempts to deal with some of these issues. We don't claim to have all the answers, but we hope that the articles we present can contribute to a discussion about the type of politics, the type of organising that we need to do. We hope you enjoy reading this issue, but we also hope you will be inspired to agitate, educate and organise for change. Without our resistance, the future will be very bleak.

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ABOUT THE WSM

The Workers Solidarity Movement was founded in Dublin, Ireland in 1984 following discussions by a number of local anarchist groups on the need for a national anarchist organisation. At that time with unemployment and inequality on the rise, there seemed every reason to argue for anarchism and for a revolutionary change in Irish society. This has not changed.

Like most socialists we share a fundamental belief that capitalism is the problem. We believe that as a system it must be ended, that the wealth of society should be commonly owned and that its resources should be used to serve the needs of humanity as a whole and not those of a small greedy minority. But, just as importantly, we see this struggle against capitalism as also being a struggle for freedom.

We believe that socialism and freedom must go together, that we cannot have one without the other. Anarchism has always stood for individual freedom. But it also stands for democracy. We believe in democratising the workplace and in workers taking control of all industry. We believe that this is the only real alternative to capitalism with its ongoing reliance on hierarchy and oppression and its depletion of the world's resources.

IAR team:

Editorial Committee:

Mark Hoskins, Brian Fagan, Aidan Rowe.
Thanks to all members of the WSM for contributions, discussion & feedback.

Authors:

Aidan Rowe, Paul Bowman, Andrew Flood, Mark Hoskins, Wendy Lyon, Eamonn Crudden, Tom Murray, Gregor Kerr, Sean Matthews.

Layout: Brian Fagan.

CONTACT US:

PO Box 1528, Dublin 8

Facebook: Workers Solidarity Movement
Facebook: IrishAnarchistReview

Twitter: @WSMIreland



WORDS: AIDAN ROWE

Disaster Communism



Extermination or communism is the choice - but this communism must be more than just the sharing of wealth (who wants all this shit?) - it must inaugurate a whole new way of working together. — Felix Guattari & Toni Negri

As I sat down to begin writing this piece, an article appeared in the Guardian titled 'Nasa-funded study: industrial civilisation headed for 'irreversible collapse'?ⁱⁱ, whose central claim was that "global industrial civilisation could collapse in coming decades due to unsustainable resource exploitation and increasingly unequal wealth distribution".

What was striking, to me, about this article was that it contained absolutely nothing new. Prophecies of impending disaster – not just climatic, but ecological, economic and social too – are common currency in contemporary society, and for most practical purposes vary only in the rhetorical intensity with which they restate the same basic truth.

Everyone knows, at least in impressionistic terms, what is happening, and what is at stake: things simply can't continue as they are if human civilisation is to survive, and what's more this is no longer a question of securing a future for our grandchildren – it's us, my generation, human beings that currently live on this planet, who are imminently faced with the disappearance of the necessary conditions for our existence.

Within 30 seconds, I had already clicked to another tab, and was scrolling through a BuzzFeed list of funny cat pictures. This is the absurdity of our condition;

Never in history has a civilisation been aware, in such detail and with such certainty, of the imminence of its own demise, and yet the dominant cultural concern of our society, around which our intellectual and technological capabilities are organised, seems to be the production, transmission and refinement of banal clickbait, the perfection of the meme as the ideal unit of contentless communication in a political economy of commodified mass distraction. Increasingly, the political and cultural forms that might allow us to grapple collectively with such crucial questions simply don't exist.

Never before have human beings had such a capacity to communicate collectively on the major questions that face us, and yet it seems we have nothing to say to one another on what is surely the central problem of our time: how to ensure not just the survival but the flourishing of the human species; how to transform a form of social organisation that is bent on self-destruction to make the Earth livable and life on Earth worth living.

What would it mean, collectively and politically, to face up to these questions? How do we come to terms with the traumatic knowledge of our own contingency, and transform this knowledge into a basis for empowerment? How do we confront the terror of ecological catastrophe, comprehending fully its implications, and yet meet it with defiance and hope? What are the conditions of possibility for such a collective encounter, and what can we do to bring them about? These are, clearly, enormous questions, to which I can only offer the flimsiest sketch of an answer.

My more modest ambition for this piece is simply to pose the right set of questions, to argue for an understanding of what is at stake that refocuses the

classic anarchist question "how do we create together a world that we would want to live in?" with a new emphasis and urgency. I will begin by interrogating some of the dominant mainstream and leftist political responses to the ecological crisis, against which I will then attempt to sketch a positive and radical (in the sense of grasping the root) political understanding of the issue.

Theosophies of catastrophe

The failure of culture to adequately deal with the problem of ecological catastrophe is hardly surprising, for a number of reasons. Perhaps most obviously, all of the main social, economic and political powers are directly dependent on the destructive processes of capitalist production to sustain their position, and are therefore highly invested in the promotion of all sorts of mystifications and non-solutions, which preserve the structure in the immediate term, even at the expense of human survival.

The traumatic nature of the knowledge we are now confronted with also inevitably leads to displacements and sublimations as a means of self-defence: the problem is warded off by reformulating it in a more comfortable mode, thereby reducing anxiety. Moreover, ecological catastrophe is what Timothy Morton refers to as a "hyperobject", that is, something so "massively distributed in time and space relative to humans" that it confounds our regular ways of knowing and thinking about objects,ⁱⁱⁱ forcing us to construct new and uncertain ways of thinking the world we now inhabit. It is due to the interplay of these factors, I suggest, that most individual and collective political responses to the ecological crisis have tended to revert to essentially religious modes of thought:^{iv}

"There is no external object called "the environment" to which another object called "society" must relate"

Faith

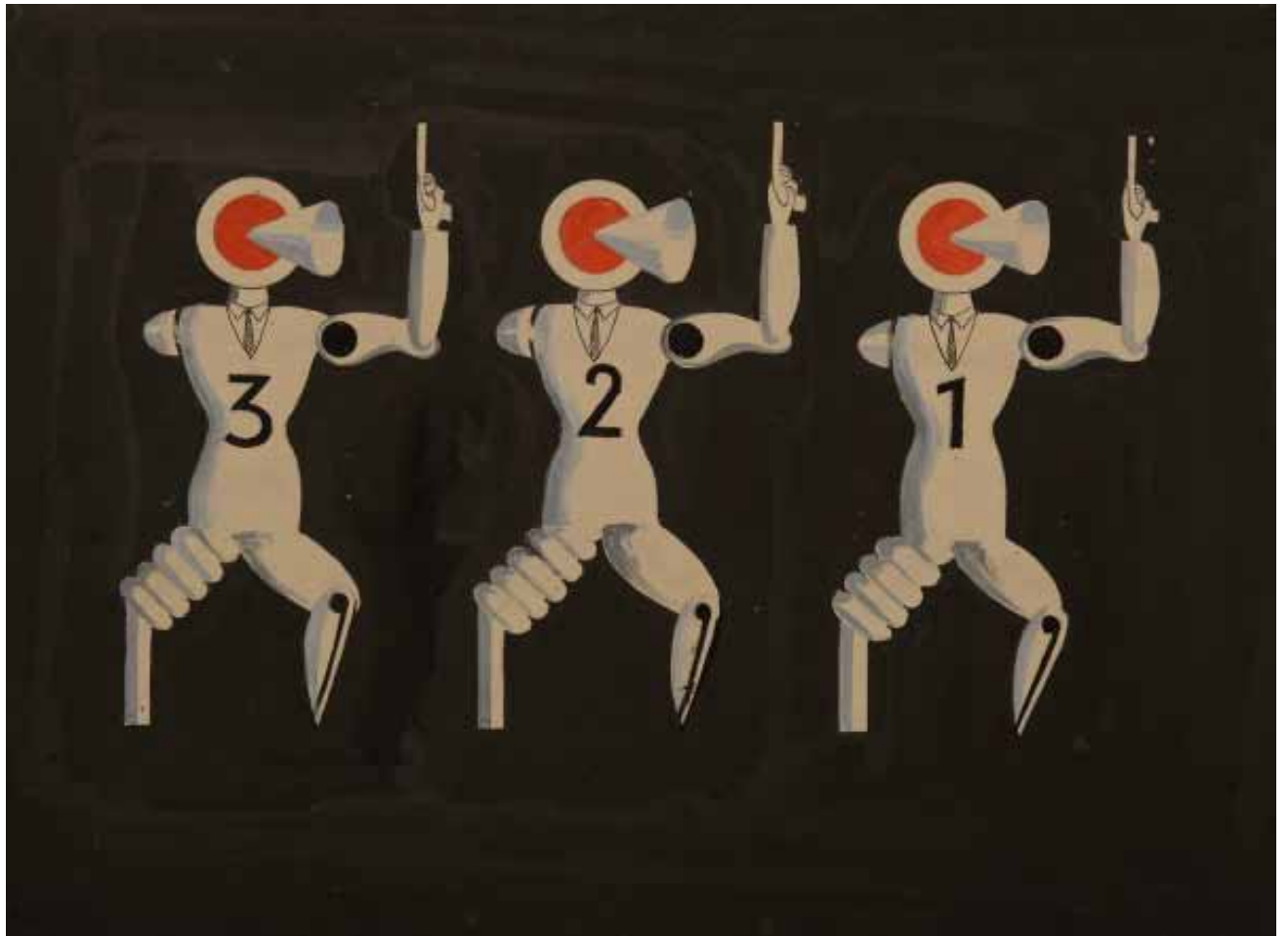
Numerous faith-based responses to the prospect of ecological catastrophe proliferate in contemporary culture. New Atheist scientism, transhumanism, green capitalism, the neoliberal cult of entrepreneurialism, and the like, all essentially produce the same response: scientific and technological innovation, coupled with the appropriate tweaks to market incentive structures, will somehow manage to save us just in the nick of time.

The problem is thus effectively displaced onto the big Other, and our role is simply to trust in the institutions of capitalist society to deliver us from danger, or, perhaps, to mobilise to put pressure on these institutions to produce the correct set of reforms and innovations, without challenging the underlying social relations. In this understanding, technological development is intrinsically liberatory, the issue is simply that of reaching the appropriate level of technological development and of deriving the appropriate policy programme to utilise it.

Of course, the fatal flaw of this way of thinking is that there is no intrinsic link between technological development and liberation. Technology is a social product: new technologies do not exist in an as-yet-unrealised form waiting to be discovered, they must be produced by a creative activity that is embedded in a set of social relations that determine its form and purpose. Moreover, technologies do not by themselves determine their use: that too depends on the kind of society that utilises them (in our case, a capitalist society whose orienting principle is the accumulation of capital).

For example, the development of renewable energy technologies has not determined a shift away from the burning of fossil fuels: by all accounts, capitalist society seems determined to exploit fossil fuel sources to the point of exhaustion (with well-known consequences) as the current global push for the use of fracking technology surely demonstrates – renewables instead function alongside fossil fuels, allowing for greater expansion of economic activity. In other words, technological development cannot offer hope so long as society is organised according to a logic that ensures the willful destruction of nature: the subordination all life on Earth to the profit motive.

Anti-capitalist versions of this technological utopianism exist too, however, and are equally faith-based in their insistence on posing the problem of ecology as essentially a scientific/technological rather than a political problem. Perhaps the most lucid and exciting elaboration of this point of view in recent times is the #ACCELERATE Manifesto,^v whose hypothesis, as summed up by Toni Negri, is that "liberation must occur within the evolution of capital; that labour power must move against the blockage caused by capitalism; that a complete reversal of the class relation must be accomplished by the pursuit of constant economic growth and technological evolution"^{vi} in



order to produce "an alternative modernity that neoliberalism is inherently unable to generate".^{vii}

The most telling aspect of the manifesto is that the authors raise at the very beginning the problem of climactic breakdown, only to immediately push it aside in order to talk about technology, without even the most meagre attempt to hint at a solution. Clearly we are meant to conclude that this problem can be safely subsumed into that of liberating the technological potential blocked by capitalism, that the resolution of all existential threats to civilisation is simply the inevitable side effect of doggedly pursuing the technological promise that capitalism is incapable of delivering on. But is this the case?

It would seem that the manifesto's argument is underpinned by the same old teleological fallacy that

Marx inherited from Hegel: that of the progressive movement of history towards ever greater liberation through the development of the productive forces – a relic of a time when the endless development of material production could be stated unproblematically as a goal because the Earth was still for all practical purposes infinite.

The society we live in today, on the other hand, is one threatened with annihilation by the determinate limits of humanity's domination of nature – a society that has a future only if it can find a way to break with the tendency towards the endless expansion of the world of things, and to subordinate the productive forces to a qualitatively different conception of the good. In the end, accelerationism is simply the mirror image of capitalist ideology's veneration of technological innovation as good in itself.

Sacrifice

One of the major projects of neoliberal capitalism has been the progressive weakening of social ties, to produce increasingly isolated and atomised individuals, and with it, the demise of collective political agency. How does such an isolated individual respond to an existential threat that is so much larger than her? One of the oldest forms of religious practice arises out of precisely this problem: how does one gain control over that against which one is utterly powerless?

The answer is: one performs gestures of sacrifice, ostensibly aimed at controlling the uncontrollable forces, but which in fact operate only to relieve one's anxiety. Recycling, organic food, ethical consumerism, dietary veganism, reducing one's carbon footprint, and, at the extreme, dropping out of society to live in closer harmony with nature: surely these are our modern day sacrificial tokens, our futile attempts to live wrong life rightly.

We know, deep down at least, that these are utterly insufficient, that capitalism simply marches on regardless – indeed incorporates our gestures into the

"The #ACCELERATE manifesto's argument is underpinned by the same old teleological fallacy that Marx inherited from Hegel: that of the progressive movement of history"

logic of accumulation by extracting extra profit from supposedly ethical consumption – that there is no plausible causal relationship between the acts we perform and the ends we imagine them to be producing, and yet we convince ourselves that by the sheer force of our will and our ethical rightness that we are achieving something, or, at least, that when civilisation finally tips over the brink that we are not the ones to blame (some comfort). The truth is that there are no individual solutions: we either find a way to intervene collectively and decisively to break with the present social order, or we are reduced to mere tokenism.

Oneness with nature, the non-hippy version

"Man [sic] lives from nature, i.e. nature is his body, and he must maintain a continuing dialogue with it if he is not to die. To say that man's physical and mental life is linked to nature simply means that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature." — Karl Marxviii

"Never before have human beings had such a capacity to communicate collectively on the major questions that face us"

"[W]e make no distinction between man [sic] and nature: the human essence of nature and the natural essence of man become one within nature in the form of production or industry, just as they do within the life of man as a species. Industry is then no longer considered from the extrinsic point of view of utility, but rather from the point of view of its fundamental identity with nature as production of man and by man. Not man as the king of creation, but rather as the being who is in intimate contact with the profound life of all forms or all types of beings... the eternal custodian of the machines of the universe." — Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattariix

Environmentalism: the question is posed incorrectly from the beginning. There is no external object called "the environment" to which another object called "society" must relate. The question of the environmental crisis cannot be posed separately from that of society, as if it were some alien entity attacking us from the outside. At every point in history, human society is that which we have forged from the transformation of nature, and nature is that on which we depend for our continued existence; nature is part of human society and human society is part of nature.

We exist in a state of profound interdependence with all forms of life – a condition we are unable to transcend, but merely develop in one direction or another. Our relations to one-another are predicated on particular relations to nature. The waged labour relation that is fundamental to capitalism required our estrangement from nature: the violent dispossession and expulsion of peasants from the land, and the enclosure of nature, its constitution as an object to be dominated and exploited was the founding event of capitalist society, a process intimately linked with the suppression and enclosure of women.x

Traditionally, environmentalists have tended to pose the question of how to prevent catastrophe as separate from questions of how humans are to relate to each other. This has tended to mean that environmentalism has confronted us as a rather bleak, desperate and negative discourse:

"'We must act today to save tomorrow' is the cry of the global greens. Great sacrifices must be made immediately for a reward launched far into the distant future. But such a reward it is! Yes, it may be far away now, but one day, dear friend, you may not be flooded! You may not starve! You might not even suffer more than you do already! Such is the dismal promise of environmentalism."xi

Indeed, this framing, due to its artificial restriction of the problem to be considered, has often tended to produce a push towards economism and away from the consideration of the intersecting forms of exploitation and domination that produce our social reality, towards compromise with authoritarian forms of organisation, and towards a joyless and debilitating seriousness in the name of urgency. Viewed this way, it seems obvious that all sorts of compromises must be made with systems of domination in order that decisive action be taken to "save the planet".

The problem is, the question is posed entirely backwards. We cannot think of taking decisive action against the destruction of nature separately from the transformation of the social relations that both arise from and reproduce the domination of nature by humans. The question rather is: what form of society is consistent with the desire to live not merely from nature, but in and with nature? What kinds of subjectivities and forms of social organisation allow us to live not as exploiters of the natural world, nor under the exploitation of others?

What desires and potentials exist in our current world that could form the beginnings of such a world? Clearly, we must have done with the negative environmentalisms that operate on guilt and fear, and that offer nothing but the postponement of death. We must have done also with all the false consolations of magical thinking that keep us invested in a political system that can only fail us.

Clearly, what we need is an anti-capitalism, but it cannot be one that simply takes over production and runs it more democratically. (In any case what system could outmatch modern capitalism in the production of endless junk?)

What we need, instead, is an environmentalism that can begin to articulate the creation of a world that is actively desirable, a world where we are freed from pointless toil by the reorientation of the values and

purpose driving production and by the judicious use of technology, a world vastly enriched in its cultural life and its possibilities for pleasure because we no longer spend all our time at work or recovering from work, a world in which difference is no longer transformed into antagonism by apparatuses of violence and domination, a world in which nature is neither to be feared nor dominated but experienced. In short: a world in which humanity will finally become possible.



References:

iFélix Guattari & Toni Negri, *Communists Like Us*, p.13

iiNafeez Ahmed, "Nasa-funded study: industrial civilisation headed for 'irreversible collapse'?", *The Guardian*, 14 March 2014. The study itself seems to be based on somewhat dubious Malthusian reasoning, but my interest in it is primarily as a cultural element rather than as a scientific work. See Ian Angus, "What did that 'NASA-funded collapse study' really say?" <http://climateandcapitalism.com/2014/03/31/nasa-collapse-study/>

iiiTimothy Morton, *Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology After the End of the World*.

ivI have ignored climate change deniers and the like here, as everyone should.

vAlex Williams and Nick Srnicek, *#ACCELERATE: Manifesto for an accelerationist politics*, <http://accelerationism.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/williams-and-srnicek.pdf>

viAntonio Negri, *Some Reflections on the #ACCELERATE MANIFESTO*, <http://criticallegalthinking.com/2014/02/26/reflections-accelerate-manifesto/>

viiWilliams & Srnicek, op. cit.

viiiKarl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*.

ixGilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, pp.4-5

xSee Silvia Fedirici, *Caliban and the Witch*.

xiOut of the Woods, *Goodbye to the Future*, <http://libcom.org/blog/goodbye-future-24022014>



AN ANARCHIST CRITIQUE OF HORIZONTALISM

WORDS: ANDREW FLOOD

Horizontalism is an emerging term used to describe the key common characteristics of the waves of rebellion of the last decade. Occupy in 2011 was the peak to date but the term Horizontalism itself appears to originate the rebellion in Argentina after the 2001 banking crisis there. Marina Sitrin in her book on that rebellion says the term was used to describe the neighborhood, workplace & unemployed assemblies that emerged to form "social movements seeking self-management, autonomy and direct democracy."

Horizontalism is a practice rather than a theory, which is to say in the various writings that use the term, it has been described in practice rather than theorised as an ideal. It's easiest to see the practice in the context of the assembly-based movements that have come and gone since the rebellion in Argentina. Particularly of course the wave that built up from 2010 on, in North Africa, Southern Europe and then went global in late 2011 with Occupy. What these movements had in common was not a single theoretical underlay but a set of developed common practices and to some extent common ways of looking at the world.

I'm using the past tense there but of course they all still have some existence, with Gezi park last summer being a fresh blossoming somewhat along that common theme - although it lacked a single assem-

"Because these are not formal organisations or even theoretical themes, they largely exist in the moment"

bly. But because these are not formal organisations or even theoretical themes they largely exist in the moment even if in between such moments relatively small groups continue to organise under their various banners. This is both strength and a weakness.

Key point of Horizontalism

In writing about Occupy, Marina Stirin listed the following characteristics which also apply generally across horizontalist movements:

"To open spaces for people to voice their concerns and desires—and to do so in a directly democratic way."

"People do not feel represented by the governments that claim to speak in their name"

"Attempting to prefigure that future society in their present social relationships."

"They want the power of corporations contained and even broken, access to housing and education expanded, and austerity programs and war ended"

"Food, legal support, and medical care"

In a more critical look at Horizontalism, partially replying to Sitrin, David Marcus defined it as "part of a much larger shift in the scale and plane of Western politics: a turn toward more local and horizontal pat-

terns of life, a growing skepticism toward the institutions of the state, and an increasing desire to seek out greater realms of personal freedom"

The qualification 'western' is probably unneeded as the movements in Egypt & Turkey share many of these same characteristics. Marxists and neo-reformists are increasingly inclined to see all these tendencies as a problem in challenging capitalism; anarchists on the other hand would broadly welcome them.

Horizontalism & Anarchism

Horizontalism includes aspects that are in parallel with anarchist methodology, in particular the emphasis on direct democracy and direct action. It also includes aspects of what are sometimes incorrectly described as anarchist methods, in particular consensus decision making, which actually entered radical politics via Quaker influence on the peace movement of the 60's.

But most participants at least start off unaware of those historical links and WSM members involved in Occupy found that participants often imagined that these methods are entirely new concepts that were being invented by them on the spot. That is they were unaware of the very long history of experimentation through the anarchist and other movements that preceded their experiments.

At least in the context of the Occupies we had some involvement in, this was a significant weakness. A certain amount of skill and knowledge is required to make assembly processes effective. The inventing it from scratch approach resulted in the 'tyranny of structurelessness' problems of the loudest voices tending to dominate assemblies and dynamics of bullying, in group formation and various power games filling in the vacuum. Inevitably these reproduce the patterns of our patriarchal, racist society - if left unchecked conversations will tend to be almost completely dominated by white men who are comfortable in playing out their expected gender role. In places this produced such unhealthy dynamics that Post Occupy this has allowed authoritarian outfits like the SWP to claim that horizontal decision making in general always leads to such outcomes and so is 'not really democratic'.

"Horizontalism also dispenses with and is often hostile to the idea of formal revolutionary organisation."

Perhaps the greatest weakness of these horizontalist movements is that they either lack a class analysis, as was the case with Gezi Park, or replace it with a pretty crude wealth/corruption/corporations concept that lends itself a little too easily to conspiratorial and reformist approaches to fighting for change. This tends to reduce what is wrong to 'evil people making evil decisions' and the idea that if this is exposed to the light of day, change will come about.

The whole 1% meme could be a useful starting point to explain capitalism & class from and to move people away from seeing the posh/poor neighborhood down the road as the problem; A grim example of all politics being local. But it can also be a starting point for a conversation about how the Rothschild's control the world via secret meetings at Bilderberg and spraying us all with fluoride from jet planes. As was found at Occupy challenging these and the associated Freeman ideas becomes quite frustrating once you don't have the shorthand of the historic tradition of the left as a common point of origin, under which they can quickly be dismissed as the latest manifestation of old and frequently anti-Semitic conspiracy theories.

The question of winning

Horizontalism also differs from anarchism in that it doesn't have either a vision of what a free society might look like or a process to move us from here to there. I don't mean some sort of detailed blueprint, I'm skeptical enough of the value of tiny number of people devoting time to planning a future for the entire world at that level of detail. I mean at the level of the picture anarchists share of a world where workplace assemblies take over the workplaces and neighbor assemblies take over and manage communities. It need not be detailed for it to be clearly

enormously different to the world we live in today.

Anarchist processes to get from here to there tend to involve a process of mass participation (e.g. syndicalist unions) followed by a moment of insurrection, sometimes pictured as a general strike, sometimes as an armed populace on the streets but actually most often a blend of the two. While there is much that can be discussed around this, like are armed insurrections even viable in the age of the helicopter gunship, it clearly is a transformative moment that can be imagined. What does that moment look like for Horizontalism? What would it look like to win?

Horizontalism also dispenses with and is often hostile to the idea of formal revolutionary organisation. Having seen how revolutionary movements tend to interact with social movements over many years, we can sympathise with the reasons for this, and around Occupy we decided to respect the bans on political organisation banners and paper sales. Technology has made this approach feasible to hold alongside trying to build mass movements for change. Once individuals who wanted such movements to emerge had to co-operate with revolutionary organisations because they needed access to their organisation resources, their press and their communication networks.

Parties knew this and thus didn't have to modify their behavior on the basis of accumulated negative experience; some organisations like the SWP instead turned isolating those who refused to tolerate negative behavior into an advanced art form. But that period appears to be over as the various tools of the Internet and mobile communications greatly weaken the link between mass organisations before mass communication. The old style party form has been spending its accumulated capital to resist that process, and as a result is starting to disintegrate as recruitment dries up and funds are exhausted. In extreme cases it faces hostility from without and rebellion from within, as its own membership use these new technologies to route communications around the formal leadership.

Anarchism has a different approach to both horizontalism and the party form. Anarchist organisation was of course also about finding a way to fill a need for mass communication, but it also arose as recognition of a need to transmit lessons across time and space in a way that they would arrive and be trusted. And the need for a common platform around which solidarity could be built across distances and different experience and cultures. In the period since Occupy I've probably had conversations with anarchists who were involved in the region of twenty Occupies and broadly share the WSM's politics. All of these conversations quickly went to quite a deep level of critique because it was simple for us to quickly establish our own political and organisational common ground.

Reform by riot & electoralism

Paul Mason writes that "the power of the horizontalist movements is, first, their replicability by people who know nothing about theory, and secondly, their success in breaking down the hierarchies that seek to contain them. They are exposed to a montage of ideas, in a way that the structured, difficult-to-conquer knowledge of the 1970s and 1980s did not allow (...) The big question for horizontalist movements is that as long as you don't articulate against power, you're basically doing what somebody has called "reform by riot" a guy in a hoodie goes to jail for a year so that a guy in a suit can get his law

through parliament"

Mason wants to deploy that argument for the creation of a new syndicalist party somewhat crudely in the tradition of De Leon or James Connolly. That is for a broad electoral formation that would provide Horizontalism with the vision of a new society and the electoral method it needs to bring that about. That's not something we'd agree with, but he still has a point about 'reform by riot'. Horizontalism without a vision and method for revolution, simply provides the protest fodder behind which once one government can be replaced with another. That indeed is one of the lessons of the experiences of Argentina in 2001, the slogan 'they all must go' meant government after government went, but after a while stability was reimposed and new stable governments came into power and stayed there.

A key way of understanding this, is to understand that Horizontalism as constructed, lacks power except the power of the individual bodies putting themselves in harm's way. Perhaps that is why nudity commonly spontaneously arises as a tactic. Anarchism has expressions of power in the form of the general strike or the people armed. Horizontalism's power consists of mobilising numbers to occupy spaces and block routes.

In Argentina the power of the unemployed assemblies rested only in the power derived from blocking motorways and bringing the flow of commerce to a halt. With Occupy Wall Street the intention to block the Brooklyn Bridge was one key flash point, as were the attempts to block Wall Street itself. As long as the numbers can be sustained these can be powerful tactics but they are tactics of protest and not of transformation.

What anarchism offers as an alternative to Horizontalism is a vision and method that doesn't simply repeat the endless pattern of government following government. We have a sense of what it might feel like to win even if the route from where we are to that point has yet to be discovered.

This article originally featured on the Anarchist Writers Blog: <http://anarchism.pageabode.com/>





WORDS: PAUL BOWMAN

An End to Growth?



Capitalism is making you fat. Capitalism is also destroying the environment. These two things are more closely connected than you might think. Not all growth is good. Certainly the growth of people's waistlines and indexes of body fat have lead scientists and health professionals to warn of a global obesity epidemic. 65% of the world's population now live in countries where being overweight kills more people than being underweight. Worldwide obesity has nearly doubled since 1980 and 1.4 billion adults over 20 are now overweight.

The notion of an obesity epidemic has been around for a few decades now and has traditionally been most associated with the world's global superpower, the USA. But the first thing we need to note about current statistics is that they very clearly indicate that this is definitely not a "first world problem". Today the country with the highest levels of obesity is not the USA, but it's much poorer next door neighbour Mexico.

Opinion is divided on the causes of the epidemic, however there is some interesting recent science around the role of refined sugars, particularly high-fructose corn syrup (HFCS), and the combination of added fats and sugars in processed food as regards the suppression of the body's natural appetite control system. The simplified version is that our appetite is controlled by hormones, including leptin which signals we are "full" and ghrelin that we want more.

It appears that refined sugars and HFCS interfere with the normal hormonal response to rising blood glucose and interfere with the action of the "fullness" hormone leptin, encouraging overeating. Similarly recent tests on mice that provided "as much as you can eat" feeders with fat or sugar alongside ordinary food, found that when either were available on their own the mice did not overeat. But when a mixture of fat and sugar together was available, the mice overate to become obese. The greatest overeating was produced with a roughly 50/50 mix, which not-so-coincidentally is similar to the kind of proportions of added fats and sugars found in many processed foods. Again the mechanism appears to be the interference with the normal interaction of the appetite balancing hormones.

So why does contemporary food science have such a strong emphasis on producing processed foods that "hack" our bodies' natural satiety process in order to encourage us to overeat? Simply put, because in the capitalist system, individual food producing enterprises are driven to sell as much of their particu-

lar product as possible, regardless of whether this meets human needs or represents an efficient use of resources available for all sectors of production. The more the McDonald's of the world can convince us to "go large" (and thus become so), the more sales they make and the more profit they make.

So fat is not only a feminist issue, but also a capitalist issue. And who says capitalist issue, also says class issue, and this in fact is visible both in the statistics and the street. It is not the richest sections of society that are most at risk from the obesity trend, but the poorest. In fact in countries with the most extreme inequalities between rich and poor, such as in the USA, you can virtually read people's income bracket from their size. Within Europe the latest figures from the WHO are that the countries with the highest figures for overweight 11-year olds are Greece (33%), Portugal (32%), Ireland and Spain (both 30%).

To a reader of the German tabloid Bild, that fact that the PIGS are the Eurozone's most overweight countries is yet one more confirmation of the widely-held view in the core countries that the economic problems of Ireland and our peripheral brethren is due to an excess of greed and a lack of industriousness and protestant work ethic. But to anyone experiencing the troika-imposed yoke of austerity, the connection between poor nutrition and poverty is painfully clear. Keeping the children fed on a vanishing family budget means going for the cheapest food, which is also the most processed and most fattening. Patronising millionaire celebrity chefs like Jamie Oliver notwith-

standing, this is an economic issue, not an education one. This mismatch between a moralising discourse on individual sinfulness (greed, sloth) as the source of the problem and, on the contrary, a more materialist focus on the economic pressures on people to take the cheapest and worst options, is one we will be looking at again in the ecological debate.

Profiting from the planet

The logic of selling more and more food and drink, well beyond the limits of natural appetite and nutritional needs, is the same logic that drives all capitalist business. Overall the way to increase profits is to sell more units. Overall this means an ever-increasing consumption of natural resources, and the associated increased carbon and other pollutant release. Or at least that is what has happened so far. The life and death question is whether this trend of ever-increasing capitalist growth will and must necessarily, lead to an ever-increasing use of scarce and non-renewable resources, or not.

Counter-tendencies are proposed - the shift from manufacturing to service industries and production of immaterial products like software, music, books and other cultural or informational products. Optimists point to the figures for amount of CO2 released per \$ of GDP. For many developed countries the rates of increase of CO2 have been lower than the rate of increase of GDP for the last decades. For them, this is a sign that rising fuel and other commodity prices will lead market forces to incentivise the shift to more efficient technologies that will allow for global GDP growth without increased CO2 emission.

On this last point, the overall global figures give little grounds for optimism. Since 2000 global GDP growth and global CO2 emission growth have increased in lockstep. The apparent declining energy density (CO2 per \$ GDP) of Western countries can be accounted for by the offshoring of production to the emergent countries as well as the failure to account for shipping and air freight CO2 for international transport in national CO2 figures. Currently the bald fact remains, the demand for more jobs and growth is a demand for more release of climate change gases.

Leaving aside the energy question, what about the impact of the shift to service and "immaterial" products on natural resource usage? Certainly Apple makes its money by selling physical objects - iPads, iPhones and iMacs - but Google still makes its money mostly through selling search services and advertising - immaterial products, surely? Well, quite apart from the physical demands of housing and equipping its human workforce, anybody who thinks that Google is not a physical-based business should consider paying the electric bill for their gigantic server farms for a month. The "non-physical" nature of software and internet services companies like Google or Facebook, has been greatly exaggerated.

What's more, the internet and digitisation revolution itself, is making earning a return on cultural products like books, musical recordings, films, etc, increasingly problematic, pushing the industries back towards "bums on seats" real-world event entertainment to stem the steady loss of earnings to free file-sharing. While the rise of digitally-copiable products definitely means battles over intellectual property will be a major battleground in the 21st century, the trend does not eliminate the material impact of increased consumption, in and of itself.

The final question is whether or not increased profit can be made from "moving up the value chain" - i.e. shifting fewer units at a higher profit per unit. Certainly there are successful companies out there making good profits from selling premium products. Couldn't that model be extended to the economy as whole?

To understand why this can't happen, we need to know that the price of a product is related to its cost of production and that costs of production are based on wages. In any individual enterprise the costs of production are split between wages and the materials from suppliers the employees need to either work on, with or in. But if we look at the suppliers of these materials, we find, in turn, that their costs are wages and inputs.

And if you follow the chain of inputs down through the suppliers, you eventually get to the primary industries where the costs are the wages of the people who extract (or grow) the primary materials directly from the earth's natural resources. The earth does not get paid - this is important in terms of the environmental effects. There may be payment of rent to state or private land owners, but that's another story. Price is downwards limited by cost and cost ultimately comes from wages.

"The logic of selling more and more food and drink, well beyond the limits of natural appetite and nutritional needs, is the same logic that drives all capitalist business."

For an enterprise in a given industry the price per unit of your product is set by your competitors based on costs of production and the average rate of profit for that industry. Costs are based on inputs and wages. If the price of inputs goes down, then they go down for all the competitors in that industry and, thanks to competition, that cost-saving will be passed on as a price-drop in the product without giving any particular enterprise an advantage over its rivals. Instead an individual enterprise can gain a temporary individual advantage by reducing the wage bill or labour time per unit, say by 10%.

That firm can then do one of two things to realise its advantage into extra profit. Either it can go smaller by reducing its workforce by 10% and making more profit on selling the same amount of units as before. Or it can go larger, either, in the rare case that there's a supply shortage that allows the market to grow at the same price, by selling 10% more units at the same price (assuming the cost of the extra inputs doesn't outweigh the labour savings), or by dropping the price of the product enough to undersell the competition and take market share off them, while still making a profit.

In the long term, given uncertainties, risks and the balance of probabilities, competition means that firms that take the going smaller strategy lose out to firms that take the go large strategy. In other words, the dynamics of the system are that overall more profits require more units.

The next piece of the jigsaw is, if efficiency and technology can reduce the amount of materials used in each unit of product enough to counteract the relentless drive to produce and consume more units of stuff? In other words, is environmentally sustainable growth (more units but less materials and energy) possible in a capitalist system?

The answer is again no. But this time the reason comes not from a single cause but is the combined effect of a number of different factors taken together. First is the fact that natural resources are taken from the earth "for free", rent aside. Second is the asymmetry of the effects of competitive cost reduction between reducing input costs and labour costs which mean that unit productivity advances faster in labour than materials overall. Thirdly is the fact of physical limits to reduction in materials used per unit, for that particular thing to have the necessary strength and substance to fulfill its useful purpose. Finally there is the necessity to rehire labour made redundant in one branch of industry in new employments, if total social investment capital is to keep growing.

All of these elements together mean that for the system as a whole the tendency is for the continual increase in the number of units being produced to result in an increase in the total energy and materials being used also.

So capitalism requires the production of more and more stuff in the service of its drive for profit. But maybe this is a good thing? The ideology that "more production is necessarily good" is called productivism. The basic idea behind productivism is that whatever is bought and consumed must be satisfying some human need or desire, and if poverty still exists then clearly the need is to produce yet more. The underlying assumption then is that capitalism is a perfectly transparent medium for conveying human desire. If people are becoming more and more obese, it must be because they want to get fat. As the American satirist H.L. Mencken once wryly observed, "There is always an easy solution to every human problem--neat, plausible, and wrong." Productivism clearly ticks all three boxes, but the reason why it is wrong deserves more explanation than a glib analogy.

If obesity is one way of looking at the relationship between human needs and capital, then hunger is the flipside. As a recent report said "Every year, we waste or lose 1.3 billion metric tons of food - one-third of the world's annual food production.[...] alongside this massive wastage and loss, 840 million people experience chronic hunger on a daily basis".

The fact is that the global economy has produced more than enough food to eliminate world hunger and malnutrition since the 1950s. Global poverty is not due to an absolute lack of production, but unfairness in the distribution of natural resources and the results of production. Not only that, but available resources are misallocated to producing outputs that maximise profit, not human utility. The examples of this mis-allocation are legion and can be found on the website of any development or global justice organisation, so we will not start a laundry list here.

Techno-optimists and Techno-pessimists

Before we look in detail at the various responses to the environmental crisis by different left-wing and ecologist tendencies, it is useful to sketch out a broad binary on this question. Broadly speaking we can divide responses to the challenge of overcoming the crisis into technological optimists and technological pessimists. As an introduction to doing so, we need to look at the legacy of the 19th century writer on political economy, Thomas Robert Malthus.



In the ongoing debates you will often hear the accusation of "Malthusian" or "Neo-Malthusian" being bandied about, often directed at techno-pessimists by their opponents. Which begs the question, what is Malthusianism and why does it have such a negative connotation for so many people?

The Reverend Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) was an English protestant clergyman who became most famous for publishing a pamphlet entitled "An Essay on the Principle of Population" in 1798. That

"The environmental problems caused by capitalist growth are not a technical problem, but a political-economic one."

the year of its publication coincided with the United Irishmen uprising no doubt contributed to the popularity of its message. The message was simple, that improvements in agricultural productivity progressed in an arithmetic (linear) fashion, but the population of the poor, left to its own devices, progressed geometrically (exponentially) until crises of famine, plague and war, reduced the population to sustainable levels. This political message that famine was "the hand of providence", god's will, balancing the

books, was later the ideological justification for the UK parliament inflicting the famine upon Ireland. As such, Malthus's name deservedly ranks up alongside Cromwell's in the annals of ignominy in Anglo-Irish relations. That historical sore point aside, Malthus was the first to raise the question of a problematic relationship between natural resources and expanding demand in political economy. Given that the general topic, broadly speaking, is one that needs addressing seriously in the 21st century, over-hasty castigations of opponents as "Malthusians" can sometimes be the logical fallacy of argumentum ad odium - the dismissal of an argument by associating it with a well-know hate figure.

Malthus' original argument related specifically to crises of overpopulation, and certainly, up until recently, there were plenty of environmental catastrophist voices warning of the impending doom of the planet due to overpopulation. However the statistics in the last decades have shown that the rate of population increase is slowing to the extent that a population peak of around 9 billion is predicted later this century. Now the accuracy of those predictions can be argued with, but the raw fact of the rate of population increase declining in recent decades, gives the lie to the basic Malthusian population thesis.

Technological optimists extend this positive news to all of the current environmental issues we are currently faced with. Our current problems with carbon release, freshwater use, topsoil loss, and so on, are simply technical problems and will be solved by human ingenuity and technological fixes in the future.

The techno-optimist position has an important subdivision into market fundamentalists and state interventionist versions. Market fundamentalists get a lot

of coverage in the mainstream media, not so much because their arguments have intellectual merit - mostly they are vacuous - but because they conveniently justify government inaction, particularly regarding anything that might cost actual money. The state interventionist wing of the techno-optimist tendency, however, accept that currently markets are failing to manage environmental issues, so see the need for some government action to steer or "nudge" industry and finance in the direction of "sustainable growth" or a newer, greener capitalism.

By contrast technological pessimists do not believe that there are technological fixes that will make a green capitalism possible without radical social transformation. Techno-pessimists are themselves subdivided into two camps. One of which believes either that there are no technological fixes to capitalist growth because technology itself is the problem or that the overuse of natural resources is, as Malthus proposed, somehow innate to the human species, left to its own devices. The other camp does not fully share these beliefs, but what defines them as a pole apart is poorly defined.

It is a core proposition of this article that this lack of definition represents a historic failure by the left to build a properly anti-capitalist and egalitarian alternative to the "sustainable growth" illusions of the techno-optimists.

But if we reject both the "technology is the solution" position of the techno-optimists and the "technology is the problem" counter from the anti-civ wing of the techno-pessimists, it is because we insist that the environmental problems caused by capitalist growth are not a technical problem, but a political-economic one.

Degrowth and other alternatives

In 1972 a small think tank, the Club of Rome, published a report "The Limits to Growth" on the problems of endless economic growth in the context of limited natural resources. Coming just a year before the 1973 oil crisis, the timeliness of the report and the grim conclusions it reached, created a sensation, eventually selling over 12 million copies in numerous translations. Unsurprisingly establishment figures lined up to criticise the report, it's model, it's computer, it's personnel, and just about everything else you could think of. A juvenile prophecy of doom was the expert opinion of most of the great and the good. The nascent ecological movement, however, took the warnings of the report more seriously. Rightfully so in view of the fact that a recent review of the reports predictions, over 30 years on, reveals that whatever the limits of its model, its predictions remain remarkably close to what has really happened in the decades since its publication.

For the sake of simplicity we will divide those ecological tendencies who took the message of "The Limits to Growth" seriously into four main families, the partisans of sustainable growth, post-growth, degrowth and deep ecology/deep green resistance. Of these four tendencies we really only want to look closely at the post-growth and degrowth ones here. The notion of sustainable growth, or green capitalism, we dismiss out of hand for the reasons already given above. Similarly the primitivist fantasies of de-industrialisation, renunciation of agriculture and return to hunter-gatherer living, and the mass extinction of 6 out of 7 billion of humanity it entails, has already been adequately dealt with elsewhere.

Post-growth is a collection of tendencies that see the need to move beyond the existing capitalist model of growth, especially as measured by GDP, on a broadly liberal and utilitarian basis. A fairly heterogeneous tendency it takes inspiration from a variety of sources, whether the 'zero growth' advocacy responding to the 1972 "Limits" report, the Transition Town and other 'peak oil' inspired movements, environmental economics, books like "The Spirit Level" pushing to turn the pendulum back against increasing inequality, and so on.

In theory the Degrowth tendency would consider itself the more "radical", explicitly anti-capitalist and anti-consumerist wing, but in practice there is much organisational cross-over between the two tendencies. Many of the groups in the post-growth network would use the degrowth moniker and lists of organisations in the two tendencies indicate quite a lot of crossover.

Nonetheless degrowth has a specific point of origin, in France, a particular ideological genealogy and identifiable leading thinkers, such as Serge Latouche or Jacques Grinevald. The latter translated into French the most influential book of Romanian-American heterodox economist, Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, a one-time protégé of Joseph Schumpeter. Originally entitled "The Entropy Law and the Economic Process", Grinevald gave his translation the French title "La Décroissance: entropie-écologie-économie" from which the Décroissance (degrowth) tendency takes its name. Georgescu-Roegen's idea was to apply the physics of thermodynamics to economics, in contrast to the supposedly Newtonian paradigm he alleged conventional neoclassical economics was based on.

The basic problems with the degrowth approach are summed up most succinctly in the recent position paper on environmentalism by the French anarchist organisation, the Coordination des Groupes Anarchistes (CGA).

If we share the foundational analysis of Georgescu-

Roegen that says that the global economy has a level of utilisation of natural resources beyond their speed of regeneration, we think that degrowth is an imperfect concept as it does not allow the exclusion of authoritarian social models nor of explicitly the institution and development of social structures and socially useful economic activities. The concept of degrowth says nothing about the political organisation that it presupposes. Hence certain ecologists can from their wishes call for a sort of ecologist "dictatorship" supposed to enforce a respect for the environment. More generally, the concept of degrowth could also be called for by people carrying a racist, theocratic or fascist vision of society.

Currently the internal contradictions of capitalism and the apparent absence of a credible revolutionary perspective cause most of the ecologist discourses and movements to oscillate between two poles, each as utopian as the other: "sustainable development" (more correctly, sustainable growth) and degrowth without an exit from capitalism. Ultimately if the capitalist system aims for growth for growth's sake, it is no more pertinent to counter it with an "alternative" consisting of degrowth for degrowth's sake.

The challenge is rather to bring back the level of global production under the limit of the renewal rate of natural resources, all while guaranteeing equal access to the goods and services produced. Thus, the fundamental question to ask ourselves to have a hope of overcoming the ecological crisis is to know who decides what is produced, and the way it is produced.

The necessary lowering of the level of production thus imposes on humanity the need to take up the challenge of direct democracy, as only populations and not private actors in competition with each other,

will really have the interest of overcoming the ecological crisis. But this equally involves taking up the challenge of equality as the only way to reduce the level of production without injuring anyone is to cover people's needs in an egalitarian way.

Thus, rather than degrowth, we demand the socialization of production and decision-making power in society to at last rationalize the economy and meet our needs in accordance with available resources.

Despite the propensity to quote Marx of leading degrowth intellectuals like Serge Latouche, it remains founded on Georgescu-Roegen's dubious thermodynamical economics which is a theory supposedly valid for all societies, past, present and future. In other words, the historical specificity of capitalism's relations of production are made to fade into the background and thus become eternalised. Like a mirror-image of the productivist ideology, degrowth sees capitalism as a transparent medium through which human desires pass untransformed, to produce "overconsumption" directly, without any role for capital's drive for self-valorisation.

In this vein, degrowth becomes just the latest sophisticated spin on the same old Malthusian technopessimism. However, we should of course not mistake the positions of its leading intellectuals or its philosophical genealogy, for the motivations of all of its partisans and activists, or the whole content of the movement itself. As we have already seen, in practice the relations with post-growth and other growth-critical tendencies tend to be more cooperative than competitive. As the CGA go on to say, if there are indeed within the degrowth movement many authoritarian and statist proto-parties and publications, there exist also more libertarian tendencies too.



But as the CGA point out, by divorcing the technical challenge of reconciling human production with sustainable resource usage, from the political-economic question of decision-making power over production, distribution, consumption, leads once more down the well-worn dead-end path of merely "political" solutions that aspire to use state power to force a different logic on capitalism than the one proper to it. Such solutions are not only authoritarian, but they are also utopian in the sense that there is no historical force with the power to deprive the capitalist class, and behind it capital, of control over society, other than the mass power of the proletariat. And there is no way to mobilise that, other than through the struggle for a more egalitarian society.

"Any struggle that aims to reduce production without first reducing inequality has no more chance of our support than of turkeys voting for Christmas."

If those at the bottom of the income hierarchy are already struggling to survive materially, then any struggle that aims to reduce production without first reducing inequality has no more chance of our support than of turkeys voting for Christmas.

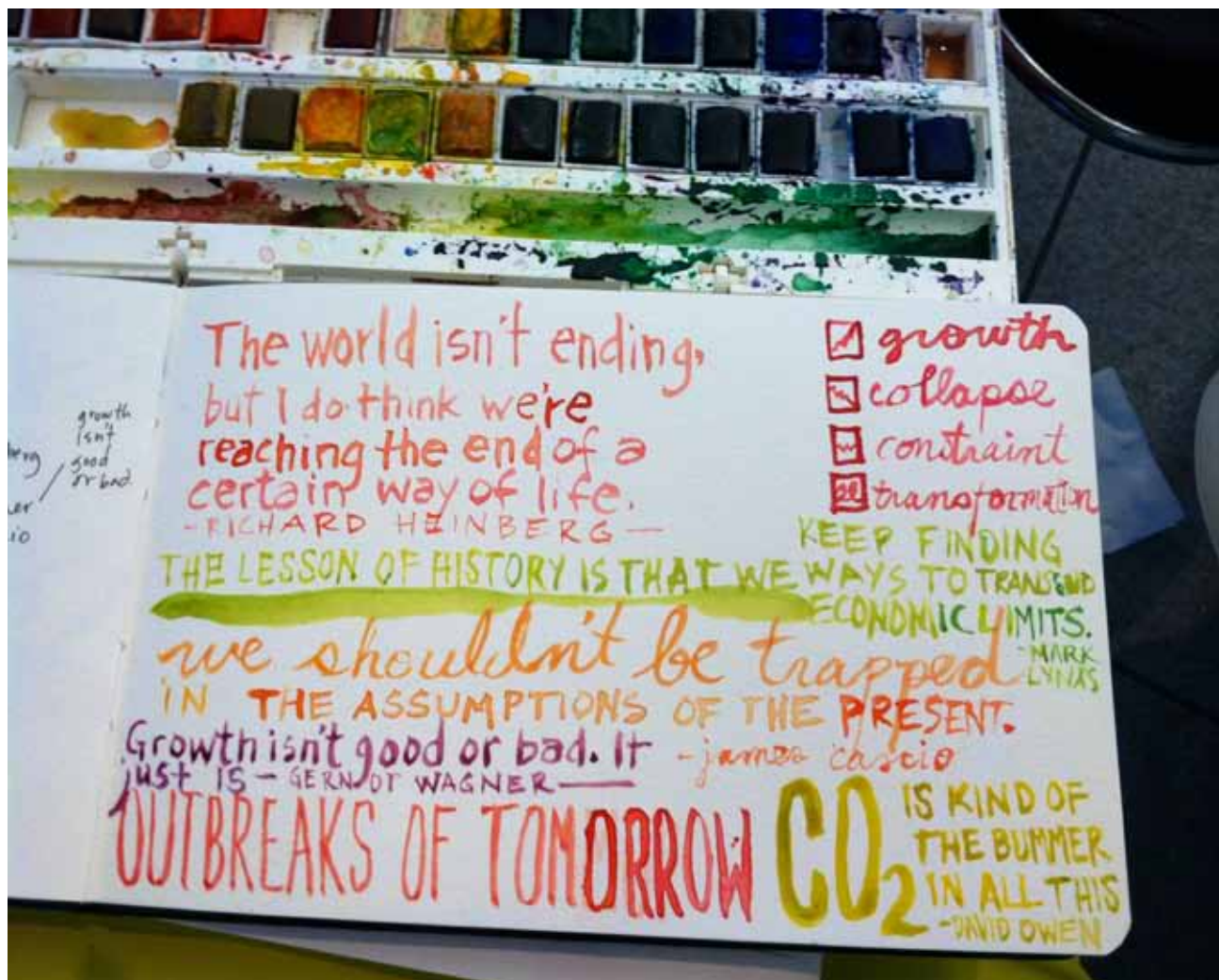
The Keynesian Left and the Growth Pact

We noted above that the historical and contemporary left have, with some exceptions, been notable by their failure to seriously engage with either environmental issues or the environmentalist/ecologist movement. At first sight this failure is puzzling. One of the core reference points for the left is the work of Marx, and with it the notion of capitalism as an inherently self-contradictory system whose very growth will lead it to crisis.

From this starting point it would be natural to assume that most of the Marxian left would find itself in the opposing camp to the techno-optimists, with their "revisionist" (to use the orthodox Marxist jargon) ideas of technological and political reforms that can perpetuate capital's endless "sustainable" growth. And yet, historically, the opposite has been the case. Socialists in general and Marxists in particular have tended to be the most enthusiastic technological optimists of all. What are the reasons for this perverse result?

The first and most obvious explanation is the appeal of the Keynesian era, preceding the current neoliberal one, which to today's battered, demoralised and increasingly diminishing left, now looks like a recent "golden age" when unions had power, the welfare state was being expanded instead of dismantled, real wages were rising and left political parties had thousands of members and some clout.

To the retro-left then, whatever their internal self-mythologising as bolshevik or other revolutionary



socialists, the raising of social-democratic demands of the Keynesian type, as an alternative to neoliberal austerity, seems the easiest path back to relevance. Indeed we could say that the "Spirit of '45" nostalgic project of reconstructing the 20th century socialist movement in today's era, more or less defines the 21st century retro-left. A project, it should be said in passing, all the more doomed for lacking any analysis of how and why the 20th century socialist movement failed.

Ironically, one of the main reasons for the failure of the movement, whether of 2nd, 3rd or 4th/etc International tendency, was its "historic compromise" with the Keynesian growth pact. The end of the Second World War left the original imperialist powers of Europe devastated and divided between an American and a Soviet sector. Minds concentrated by the loss of China to the Maoists, the US deviated from the normal relationship of empires to their new colonial possessions and embarked on a project of reconstructing industrial production and markets in Western Europe, rather than see the Iron Curtain extend to the Atlantic.

Both the social-democratic parties of the 2nd International, and the pro-Moscow official Communists of the 3rd adopted the strategy of supporting this capitalist and industrial reconstruction. Keynesian policies of full employment and welfarism laid the supports for this cross-class collaboration for a capitalist growth that promised to yield increased living standards for workers in the old imperialist countries of Western Europe (even if the more limited trickle-down benefits for post-colonial countries, made the Keynesian "golden age" still one of underdevelopment and emigration for Ireland, lest we forget...). And on the whole the rest of the ultra-left, lacking the mass implantation in the working class that the social-democrats and Stalinists then still had, had little choice but to tag along with the populist linking of capitalist economic growth with real income growth for workers.

Since the political and economic crises and social upheavals of the late '60s and '70s, the neoliberal restructuring of the world economy has effectively ended the link between capitalist growth and rising real wages for Western workers. Although not a uniform story across all countries - Germany has not suffered the de-industrialisation of the UK, for example; The effects of global relocation of production and trade flows, were masked by the increase of financialisation and credit. A masking effect that has since been severely impacted since the 2008 crisis.

The crisis has not been good for the left. After the last decades of reassuring itself that they were keeping the revolutionary flame alive for the day when the neoliberal deferral of economic crisis could no longer be maintained, when the working classes would flock once more to their red banner, the more or less complete absence of any significant re-appearance of the class struggle, has left them directionless, demoralised, and rapidly shrinking in numbers.

Apart from the usual hunting of scapegoats to blame (feminists, apparently - who knew?), the left's knee-jerk reaction is to try and form left unity projects to reconstruct the workers movements of the "good old days" of the Keynesian era. As such the public propaganda of the electoral left consists mainly of monotonously banging the drum for "Jobs and Growth!" like the Duracell bunny, in the hopes that this will bring the masses back to the fold.

So much for nostalgia for the Keynesian productivity pact and electoral opportunism. But it should be said that the technological utopianism of the left actually predates the Keynesian era by a long chalk. From Lenin's famous dictum that "socialism is soviet power plus electrification", to well before that, orthodox Marxism saw capitalism's industrial growth as essentially positive. According to their teleological theory of history, historical materialism, the historic mission of capitalism is to develop the productive forces

(technology, infrastructure) to provide the material basis for socialism and communism.

According to this theory the inner contradictions of capital would eventually manifest itself in a contradiction between the forces of production and the relations of production (capitalist private property and profit, the markets, etc). But there was never any sense that the inner contradiction of capitalism could come from within the development of the forces of production itself. That capitalism could develop the forces of production to the point where they would threaten to extinguish the environmental preconditions for human life and civilisation itself, was never part of the orthodoxy.

Consequently, even before the Keynesian era, pre-Bolshevik Marxist social-democracy of the Second International was unabashedly techno-optimistic. So much so, that the first major heresy from within its ranks, that of Eduard Bernstein, was the idea that capitalist growth would gradually transform the economy into a workers paradise of its own accord.

Naturally the more devoted Marxists within German social-democracy at the time, like Kautsky, Luxemburg recognised the liquidationist implications of this idea. With such a optimistic prognosis for capitalism itself, the need for any explicitly anti-capitalist ideology such as Marxism, or even socialism more generally, would become null and void for the "pragmatic" and reformist tendencies within the party and labour movement more generally. Such indeed has been the historical tendency within Social-democratic and Labour parties across the West. Consequently the reaction to the Bernsteinian heresy, which defined a Marxist "orthodoxy", emphasised the absolute necessity of Marxism as a theory of the immanent crisis of capitalism.

While there were variations on the exact nature of the crisis theory, the main centre of gravity was, and remains, the so-called Law of the Tendency of the Rate of Profit to Fall or LTRPF. The problems with this crisis theory are much too involved and far too boring for non-Marx nerds to go into here, but the point regarding the techno-optimism bias is that this still frames the immanent contradiction of capital as being between its relations of production (dominated by the search for profit) and the development of the forces of production.

That is, there is no innate problem with the development of the forces of production itself, which is still seen, as an unmitigated positive. A symptom of this is the continued marginalisation from the Marxist mainstream of those techno-sceptic and anti-productivist tendencies emerging from the radicalism of the '60s and '70s, which criticised the capitalist development of technology as internal to the class struggle and the contradictions of capitalism. Tendencies such as the Situationists, the Italian operaists and autonomists, the post-Bordigists inspired by the work of Jacques Cammatte, and so on.

Another cause of the contemporary left's bias towards techno-optimism we need to consider is the psychological filtering effects of its current sectarian condition of being separated from the class. Except in certain countries, this condition is common to all left, ultra-left, anarchist and ecological groups. Consequently each tends to attract recruits whose cultural and personal preferences predispose them to one or another type of politics.

People predisposed to be technological optimists gravitate more towards the left, particularly the retro-left, and those with techno-pessimist tendencies more towards the environmental or ecologist movements. The result is that dialogue between left and ecologist activists tends to be obstructed by not

just differences in political and philosophical starting points, but also personality differences and cultural preferences.

As much as some people may dismiss such differences as "unpolitical", in fact they need to be recognised and allowances made for them. That is, if any productive engagement is to be had. Otherwise the result will be a sterile process of talking at, rather than to, the other side, with assimilationist calls ("unity means you unite with us, on our terms") alternating with outright hostility.

An end to growth?

When we raise the question of an end to growth there is a deliberate ambiguity in the sense of "end". On the one hand there is end in the sense of putting a stop to capitalist growth, or more specifically, the accumulation of capital. On the other there is end in the sense of 'ends and means', of the goals of a process. The second core proposition of this article that it is impossible to talk of the first sense without simultaneously addressing the second.

If we want an end to capitalism's endless expansion of production consuming non-renewable resources, then we have to radically transform our economic and social structure to serve different goals. The question then is, is such a transformation compatible with retaining inequality? We have already discussed above the utopian character of any project for radical change which cannot be shown to be in the interests of the great majority. Capitalism keeps the great majority in material precarity, to force us to sell the bulk of our time to its valorisation process.

Otherwise who wouldn't choose to work 2 days a week and spend the rest of the time with family, friends and kids? Keynes' vision that by the 21st century we would all be working 4-hour days or less, just shows his lack of understanding of capitalism as a system where capital's needs override those of people. Given the perpetual reproduction of relative material and time poverty, backed up by the threat of the absolute poverty of unemployment, working class people are well aware that a general reduction of social production, without an even greater reduction, or elimination, of economic inequality, would push those at the bottom of the income ladder underneath the threshold of survival. The struggle to reduce overproduction has to begin with the struggle for economic equality and control over production to make it serve human needs directly, without the mediation of profit and capital.

For libertarian communists then, we need to strive to undo the damage of the productivist bias of the historical left that has left the anti-capitalist movement divided into leftists and ecologists. We need to work towards the recomposition of an antagonist movement that is both anti-capitalist and anti-productivist without being anti-humanist. To do so we need to be in dialogue with both camps; On the one hand challenging the fetishism of the forces of production and productivist biases amongst the socialists, on the other pushing back against misanthropic tendencies and the mystification of capital's role in the crisis of unsustainable production.

Above all that dialogue needs to start from a position of openness rather than arrogance, one that accepts that given the scale of the problem, no-one can claim to have all the answers from the outset. To find answers that work for us, we need a dialogue that accepts difference with mutual respect and a presumption of good faith on the part of all participants. Capitalism's destruction of our environment is not a problem we will need to deal with at some time in the future, it is already here and we need to start dealing with it now.



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Fracking Hell

WORDS: EAMONN CRUDDEN

HYDRAULIC FRACTURING and COMMUNITY RESISTANCE

On the 26th of March 2010, the Fianna Fail / Green governing coalition announced that they were inviting applications for 'Onshore Licensing Options over the North-west Carboniferous Basin and the Clare Basin.' The senior minister in the department at the time was Green Party TD, Eamon Ryan. Conor Lenihan (Fianna Fail) was the department's junior minister.

On the day this invitation to the oil and gas industry was announced Conor Lenihan stated that "over recent months there has been renewed interest in targeting the natural gas resource potential of the two basins, which had been identified in earlier exploration. Finding and producing our indigenous natural gas resources is critical to enhancing Ireland's security of energy supply and reducing our reliance on imported fuels".

A similar licensing process had been underway in the UK from 2007 onwards. The process there has been sped up by the Cameron government over the last two years and at this point in time, pending the outcome of an Environmental Assessment report commissioned by the UK Government from a fracking related engineering firm - AMEC, 60% of the land

mass of the UK may soon be licensed for exploration.

Campaigners, established environmental groups such as Greenpeace, and the Guardian Newspaper have made clear over the past 12 months that the present UK government is thoroughly penetrated by a network of advisors, led by Lord Browne, with substantial financial interests in the nascent Fracking industry. It is thus highly likely that massive areas of the UK will be added to those already licensed in the very near future, leading to an intensification of the ongoing and increasingly public conflict between communities and the fracking industry. This conflict has become highly visible over the past year at test well locations at Balcombe outside London and Barton-Moss outside Manchester.

A trail of destruction

On the same day in 2010 that the Fianna Fail / Green Party government made their initial announcement, Reuters published a story concerning the problems surrounding this industry with particular emphasis on problems in terms of water pollution. This article was, at that time, the latest in a trickle of stories that were beginning to emerge from communities and organisations all across the U.S. outlining the trail of destruction this industry was causing as it moved closer to areas where people were living.

The release of 'Gasland' in 2010, an American documentary film by artist Josh Fox which picked up on some of these stories, was the key catalyst in the appearance of what can now, considering the explosive

growth of campaigns against Fracking in the US, UK, Poland, Romania, South Africa and Ireland etc., confidently be described as a global movement in opposition to the extraction of shale gas using hydraulic fracturing. The film provided a shared reference point for the numerous groups which were rapidly appearing worldwide as a host of companies began to move to bring fracking outside of the U.S. to the rest of the planet.

Global risk consultancy firm 'Control Risks' in a 2014 report on the growth of the Anti-Fracking Movement noted that the formation of collectives and protest groups in opposition to fracking internationally routinely followed community screenings of the documentary. In their words 'Gasland brought anti-fracking sentiment to the masses'.

Almost a year after inviting applications for onshore licenses, on February 14th 2011, Conor Lenihan announced "the completion of a detailed evaluation by his Department of the applications received for Licensing Options in the Northwest Carboniferous Basin and the Clare Basin". In offering the Licensing Options Minister Lenihan said that he was very pleased by the level of interest shown in the competition and by the quality of the applications submitted by the companies.

One license was awarded to Tamboran Resources for an area covering 243,635 acres in the Northwest Carboniferous Basin. Another license was awarded to Lough Allen Natural Gas Company for over 115,398

///// FRACKING HELL – HYDRAULIC FRACTURING AND COMMUNITY RESISTANCE /////

acres, also in the Northwest Carboniferous Basin. The last license was awarded to Enegi Oil covering an area of 122,317 acres in the Clare Basin. Between the three licenses awarded, vast areas of eleven counties in the republic were zoned for exploration. Tamboran Resources also by that point held a license for exploration in Co. Fermanagh. At this point in time in 2011 in the UK Fracking was being used by Cuadrilla for the first time in Lancashire. The process caused two small earthquakes leading Cuadrilla to suspend operations voluntarily.

“Conor Lenihan has since his period in government taken up employment with San Leon, a company involved in Fracking in Poland.”

Much of the area in Ireland which was zoned is in the Shannon Basin Region and stretches from Fermanagh all the way down to Cork and Kerry. This area covers the natural drainage basin of the Shannon itself. Under the EU Water Framework, this area, its waters and ecosystems are supposed to be “protected”, “enhanced” and “promoted” as a sustainable environment and as “quality” water resources. This ecosystem includes the rivers, lakes, canals, groundwater and surface waters of the region.

A strange shade of green

The licensing options were signed off on by Conor Lenihan in the very short period between the Green Party pulling out of government in late January 2011 and the election which took place on 25th February. Some activists are convinced that, despite these options being a live concern for Eamonn Ryan in early 2011, he failed to bring this process to any kind of public visibility.

He confirmed in a telephone conversation with an activist, after having left government, that while Minister he had met with at least one of the companies who were subsequently granted licenses. This was confirmed at that time by Martin Keeley then of LANGCO who said that Eamonn Ryan was 'very much behind the project'. In the same phone conversation Ryan confirmed that he was aware, while in office, of the substantial controversy in the US around issues linking Fracking to water contamination.

In the eyes of activists - the way in which these options were given out - without any public scrutiny whatsoever - by a government who by that stage had no democratic legitimacy - has contaminated



the process from the beginning. It is also worth noting the failure of the remnants of the southern Irish Green Party to provide leadership on this issue in the period since, despite this clearly being the type of issue that is within the remit of such a party. Conor Lenihan has since his period in government taken up employment with San Leon, a company involved in Fracking in Poland.

Over just the few short years since the release of Gasland, in the United States, Canada and Australia, as onshore fracking for unconventional gas has drawn closer to inhabited areas, where there are water systems, aquifers and rivers, local communities have continued to suffer the consequences of this rapidly expanding industry. Anecdotal reports of contaminated water in rivers, lakes and domestic water supplies have increased into a flood. As time moved on further reports of disappearance, sickness and death in wildlife and livestock were also being reported, as well as a rise and commonality of various illnesses, including various cancers and respiratory problems in people living in areas where unconventional gas extraction was taking place. Over the last number of years in the U.S. thousands of complaints have been lodged with the government, the EPA, public representatives, health authorities and the industry.

Simultaneously – more and more peer reviewed scientific reports have cast doubt on the safety of the industry for communities. A key recent example is

a study of Pennsylvania birth records from 2004 to 2011, by researchers from Princeton University, Columbia University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which found that infants born within a 2.5-kilometer radius of fracking sites have increased likelihood of low birth weight and of other health problems. According to a 2011 report by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, invasive breast cancer is on the rise in the six Texas counties with the Barnett Shale's most intense gas drilling development, even as the incidence rate for the disease is falling across the rest of the nation.

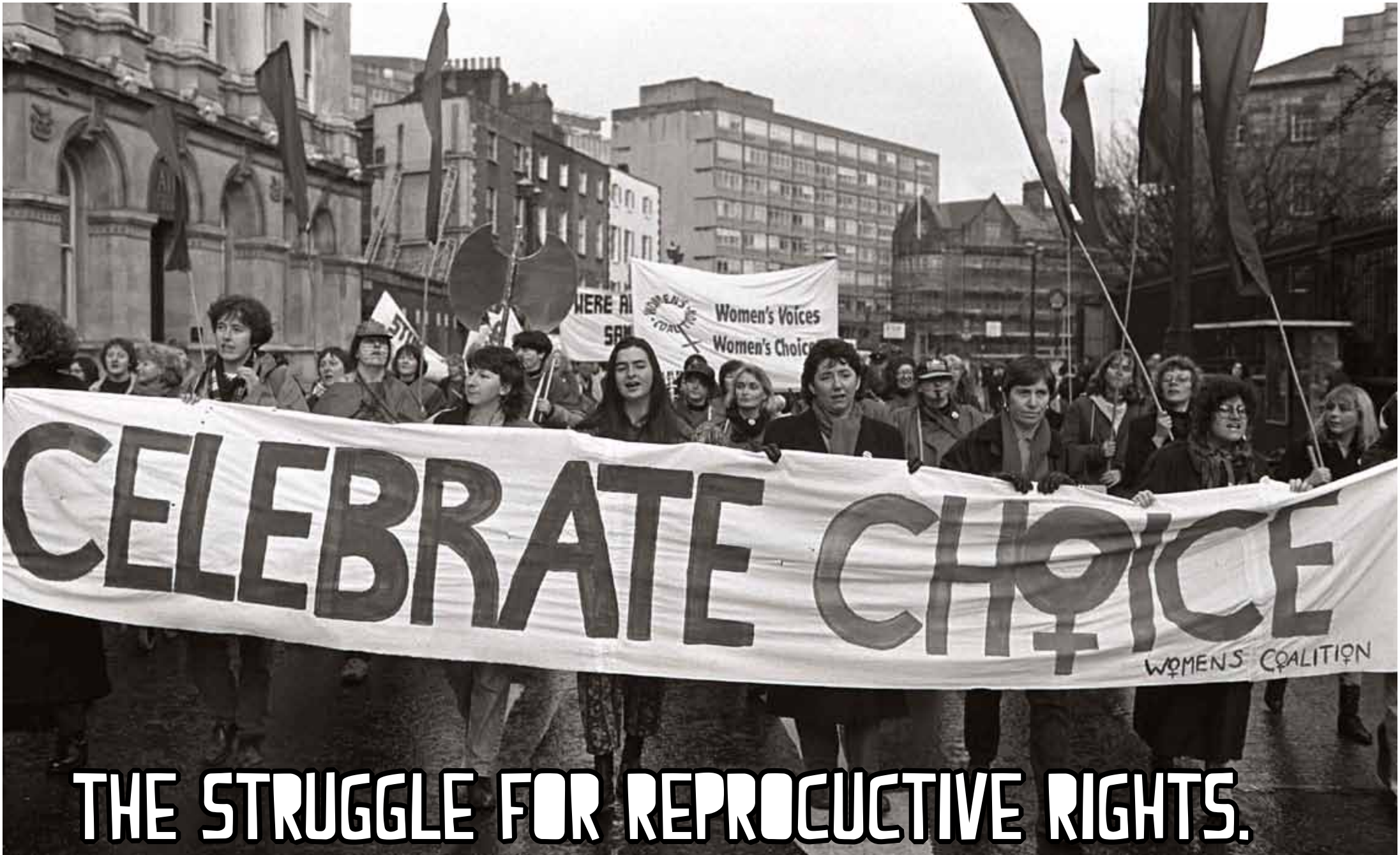
There is a very real sense that the quite sudden 'dash for gas' that is apparent in the UK and Eastern Europe constitutes a race between the slow process of peer reviewed scientific investigation and an industry that fears the consequences for communities that scientific enquiry will reveal.

Manufacturing consent, organising dissent

A massive billion dollar public relations campaign by the industry followed the release of 'Gasland' and many professionals and individuals who were outspoken about the effects of the industry were issued with gagging orders. In the U.S. the national mainstream media began to pay some attention, and as New York State became the industry's latest target, the New York Times decided to devote a whole series of investigative articles to 'fracking'.

This series was entitled 'Drilling Down'. One of these

“Sadly for many communities all over the U.S., Australia and Canada, the damage is already done.”





“Campaigners very much suspect that this process will not go ‘live’ again in the Republic until after this cycle of elections.”

articles included leaked, insider emails describing the economics of the industry as boom-bust. Other articles covered issues of land, air and water pollution, serious health risks, political interference, a crash in the value of land and housing, problems of toxic waste disposal, accidents and spills. The list goes on. Deborah Rogers, a financial analyst and Obama administration advisor who visited Ireland in 2013, concluded in a report she authored that the hydraulic fracturing boom could lead to a “bubble burst” akin to the housing bubble burst of 2008. “It is highly unlikely that market-savvy bankers did not recognize that by overproducing natural gas a glut would occur with a concomitant severe price decline.

This price decline, however, opened the door for significant transactional deals worth billions of dollars and thereby secured further large fees for the investment banks involved. In fact, shales became one of the largest profit centers within these banks in their energy M&A portfolios since 2010. The recent natural gas market glut was largely effected through overproduction of natural gas in order to meet financial analyst’s production targets and to provide cash flow to support operators’ imprudent leverage positions”.

The growth of an anti-fracking movement in New York, again in a manner mirroring events in Ireland

and the UK, was boosted by the Occupy movement which quickly provided a high visibility platform for anti-fracking activists. Sadly for many communities all over the U.S., Australia and Canada, the damage is already done. But because of these people speaking out and standing up alongside others who are currently being threatened by this industry there is a truly global people’s movement emerging right now to ban unconventional gas extraction. In the U.S. some opponents of the industry say it is not possible to shut down the industry immediately - that this would take time. However it still is possible to stop it from spreading and being introduced elsewhere and that is what is happening presently in New York state and elsewhere in the US.

In a chemical world, It's very, very, very cheap

The extraction of unconventional shale gas is inherently a contaminating, flawed industrial process. A mixture of up to 500 chemicals is used during the process. Eighty to three hundred tonnes of chemicals can be added to one to eight million gallons of water each time a well is fracked. Scientists in the US are still trying to find out which chemicals various companies are using during the process. This mixture of chemicals, sand and water is pumped down through aquifers at high pressure which fractures the shale and props open fissures that enable natural gas to flow out of the well. Apart from chemicals being added to the water, scientists have stated that the process is also dislodging and mobilising naturally occurring radioactive compounds such as uranium, radium, and strontium, as well as other heavy minerals.

Problems of water contamination mainly come from leaking well casings. In Josh Fox’s more recent short documentary ‘The Sky is Pink’, the director explains how through leaked industry documents, the problem of leaking well casings for the industry has been known for some time and is, by their own admission, insolvable. From information obtained from industry documents, Fox states that over thirty years, 50% of all well casings fail.

He goes on to say that there is a period for which we need these well casings to last, so that they do not allow our water to be polluted, that period of time is “forever” and this is one of the major problems that the industry will not own up to. In Europe and here in Ireland, the industry, aided by the EU and our government are trying to tell us, that shortly the process to extract unconventional gas will be improved through regulation, more monitoring and better cement well casings.

They are also claiming that very soon there may be fracturing which does not use chemicals or even water. As the industry, supported by government, scramble to sell us a non-existent improved process - what they fail to realise, is that the problems surrounding this industry are not just about the technology or one aspect of how it pollutes. The problems caused by this industry are multi-faceted. Basically speaking, the problem is the industry itself, from beginning to end.

Scientists have clearly indicated that the full effects this industry will have on people and the environment will not be known for years to come. Not only will the industry cause irreversible pollution to our water, land and air through various stages of the process, it will also industrialise hundreds of thousands of acres of our landscape. It takes hundreds of trucks over two months to service one well.

North-West networks of resistance

Tamboran who intend fracking in Fermanagh and Leitrim propose to have up to sixteen wells on each well pad. A well pad can be up to five or six acres in size. They envisage having hundreds of pads all over the north-west, which would entail miles and miles and miles of pipes linking these pads. Once these wells have been drilled they are there forever. There is no ‘fill them in and forget about it’ option. These wells will continue to leak and release highly toxic substances for their entire lifetime.

The introduction of this type of industry on this scale, will threaten existing sustainable industries such as farming, tourism and renewable energy. It will also threaten the future supply of the country’s domestic water. Plans are already underway to take water from the Shannon Basin region for the Dublin metropolitan area. Unconventional gas extraction and the resultant local use of this fossil fuel will also threaten any hopes we have of meeting our carbon emission targets, and seriously undo efforts to reduce the growing negative impacts of climate change.

We will receive nothing beneficial from this industry apart from a few short-term, low paid jobs. The gas extracted will be sold on the global market to the highest bidder. In a recent article in the Irish Times it was reported that there is perhaps just enough shale gas in the North West Carboniferous Region to supply Ireland for a mere 12 years. Five Irish county councils have called on the government to ban shale gas extraction in Ireland and two of these – Donegal and Leitrim are in the process of inserting bans on Fracking into their County Development Plans. Several countries, various states in the U.S and federal regions in other countries have banned or are putting in motion plans to ban the industry.

The campaign which has emerged in Ireland since summer 2011 began according to the ‘Gasland’ script identified by the ‘Control Risks’ report. Filmmaker and Green Party activist Johnny Gogan, in his role as curator of the ‘Leitrim Mobile Cinema’ began in early 2011, to screen Gasland in Leitrim. The screening of Gasland which took place in Drumshanbo in summer 2011, was the first opportunity for a relatively large group of interested locals to get a sense of what the shale gas industry was and what fracking was. At that point it was already quite widely known in the





Info on Campaigns in UK and Ireland

1. Frack Off UK: <http://frack-off.org.uk>
2. Fracking Free Ireland: <http://frackingfree-ireland.org/>
3. Facebook: NO FRACKING IRELAND group.



north-west that a number of companies had been granted onshore licensing options, allowing for desk-top studies of the potential for shale gas extraction, by the Fianna Fail led government immediately before the February general election.

In the aftermath of that screening a campaign began to form. After a number of meetings, drawing in activists from the geographically dispersed areas for which licensing options had been granted - more localised ad-hoc campaign groups began to form in Leitrim, Sligo, Donegal, Clare and Dublin. During these early meetings a reasonably clear consensus emerged, that a top down national campaign would be less effective than a series of networked but largely autonomous campaign groups.

A network of activists - working with the tiny Lough Allen Conservation society - began in August 2011 to plan a meeting to take place in Carrick on Shannon. This was in response to the fact that Tamboran Resources, one of the companies granted a licensing option, had very clearly begun a public relations campaign in the Leitrim area. In retrospect, this period was vital for the emergent campaign - and the speed with which it responded to Tamboran's 'campaign' in the area was key in successfully undermining their story about gas and its potential for development in Leitrim.

Five days before Tamboran were due to meet with Leitrim County council, to brief them on their plans for the area, a meeting organised by the LACS drew a massive crowd to the Bush Hotel in Carrick on Shannon. The hotel management at the time estimated that over 600 people attended and the tenor of the meeting was clearly in opposition to the prospect of a Fracking industry making any headway in Leitrim.

A substantial protest greeted the initial meeting of Tamboran with Leitrim County Council just five days later. When Tamboran held a public information meeting just two days after that in Carrick on Shannon - a huge and again mostly hostile crowd turned

out to grill them on their plans. The combination of these three events served to make clear that Tamboran had failed in this initial push to gain the consent of the local community. This initial failure of the company to gain community consent gave activists time and space to strengthen and deepen their campaign over the following two years - a process which led eventually, despite the opposition of Fine Gael members of the Council, to a majority vote in early 2014 in Leitrim County Council to insert a ban on Fracking into their draft County Development plan.

The 'dash for gas' in the Republic is 'on hold' at present as a comprehensive EPA report on Fracking is in the process of being commissioned and completed. This delay in the eyes of campaigners is due to the unwillingness of the current government parties to push through a clearly unpopular initiative in the runup to local, European and national elections. Campaigners very much suspect that this process will not go 'live' again in the Republic until after this cycle of elections.

They have also noted the ominous nature of Centrica's imminent takeover of the gas infrastructure presently operated by Bord Gais. Centrica are a leading energy company in the UK and have substantial investments in Fracking companies including notably Cuadrilla. It is a different story at present in the North. There it seems that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry, led by the DUPs Arlene Foster, are determined that Tamboran begin test drilling in Fermanagh in the next 6 to 9 month period. At present an increasingly intensive process of networking and planning for this eventuality is taking place between activists and groups in Fermanagh and Leitrim.



SO MUCH FOR SOLIDARITY. HOW ICTU THREW SEX WORKERS UNDER A BUS

WORDS: WENDY LYON

In 2012 The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) made a submission to the Irish government's public consultation on the prostitution laws. Most of it was just a cut-and-paste job of text sent to them by the Turn Off The Red Light campaign, which seeks the introduction of the Swedish model. But there is one part of ICTU's original contribution which I found remarkable. A few paragraphs down the submission cites – clearly for the purpose of endorsing – the view of the Technical, Electrical & Engineering Union's General Secretary that "prostitution could not be considered work".

ICTU didn't invent this view, of course. But it strikes me as taking on a much graver significance when held by trade unionists than by, say, radical feminists or religious puritans. Because the corollary of prostitution not being work is, of course, that the people engaged in it aren't workers – and are therefore not entitled to the rights that trade unions (theoretically) exist to defend.

Effectively, what they're saying to sex workers who want those rights is: piss off, and call us when you've found a real job.

"I can't think of another sector in which the "solution" would involve the wholesale rejection of labour rights for those involved"

This position puts ICTU at odds with the International Labour Organization, to which it is of course affiliated. While the ILO takes an officially neutral stance on the legal status of sex work, it has made abundantly clear that it recognises the sex industry as a de facto economic sector, and people who sell sex as engaging in a form of labour. In its groundbreaking 1998 report *The Sex Sector: The Economic and Social Bases of Prostitution in Southeast Asia*, for example, editor Lin Lean Lim proposes that

"For those adult individuals who freely choose sex work, the policy concerns should focus on improving their working conditions and social protection, and ensuring that they are entitled to the same labour rights and benefits as other workers."

The international standards developed by the ILO also reflect this position – albeit impliedly rather than explicitly, in their frequent reference to "all branches of economic activity" (my emphasis). The 1981 Occupational Safety and Health Convention is an example. And what about the jurisdictions which have actually incorporated those standards into their own laws around sex work, such as New Zealand?

The table here, from Abel, Fitzgerald and Brunton's, "The Impact of the Prostitution Reform Act on the Health and Safety of Sex Workers" (2007) illustrates

"In some respects, this betrayal isn't really a surprise: the Irish trade union movement has a long history of selling out Irish workers, especially those at the margins"

the outcome for sex workers.

The phenomenal figures in the last three rows of that table are the consequence of legislation which was expressly designed to treat sex work as work – legislation, in other words, designed to do exactly what ICTU says the law shouldn't do. And thus ICTU, which is a trade union body hence theoretically a workers' rights organisation, would reject a framework agreed to be rights-protective by over 90% of the workers operating within it, because they don't consider them "workers" to begin with. ICTU policy would take those rights away from them.

I've been racking my brain trying to think of a parallel to this extraordinary situation, and I'm honestly stymied. Even considering the obvious context – disapproval of prostitution as a matter of principle – I can't think of another sector in which the "solution" would involve the wholesale rejection of labour rights for those involved.

I cut my political teeth in anti-war and anti-nuclear campaigning, and I don't recall anything remotely comparable to this. We may have wanted to decommission the bases and power plants but we never said labour law shouldn't apply to people working at them.

Nor can ICTU's position be justified on the basis that sex work isn't really a choice. The term "work" may be deemed inappropriate for actual forced labour, the labour of someone who is literally enslaved – but ICTU, like all but the most fanatical fringes of the anti-sex work movement, don't seem to think that most in the sex trade fall into this category.

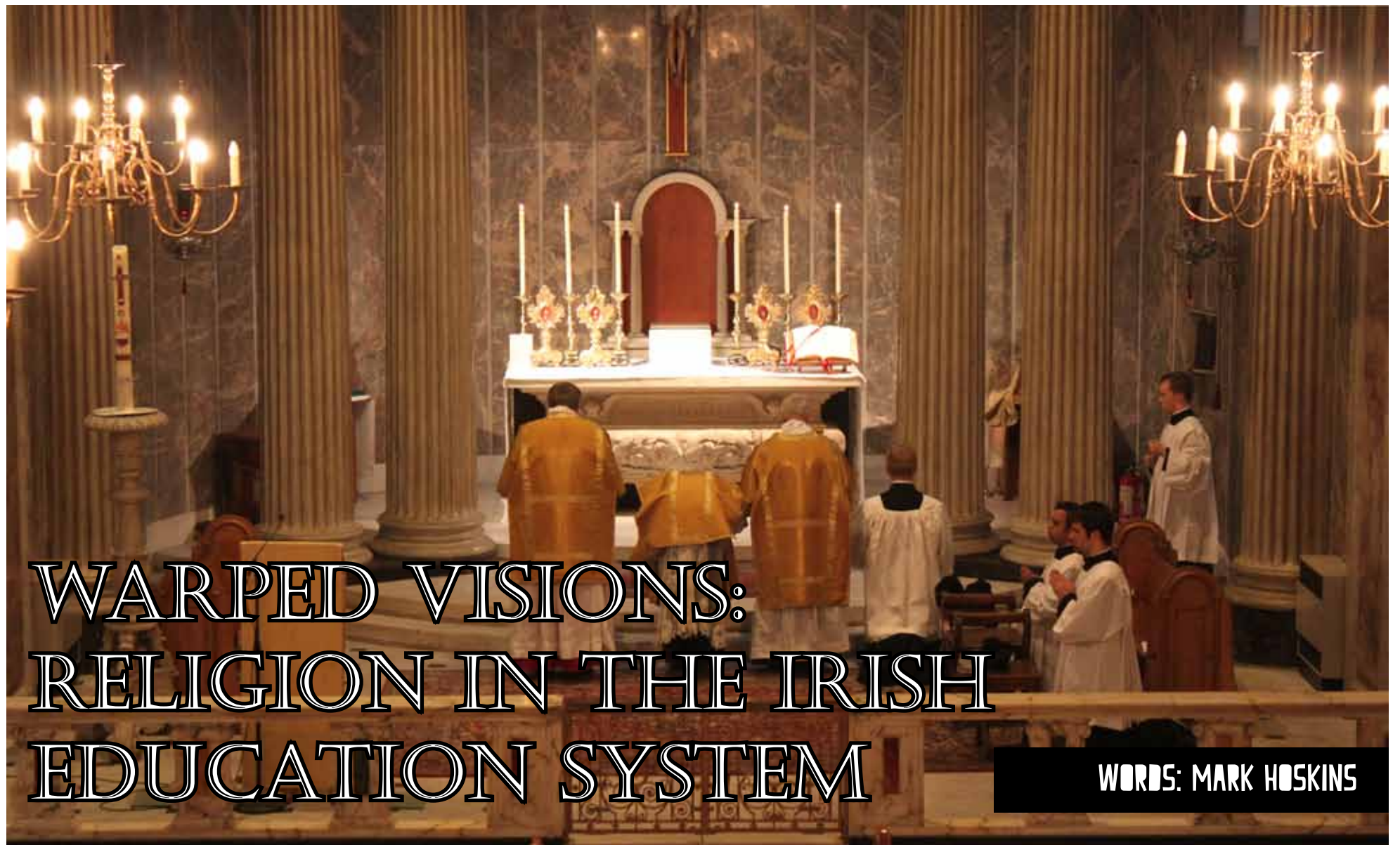
Instead, their submission refers to the "poverty, past history of abuse or limited life choices" that push people into prostitution. But ICTU don't see it as "not work" when poverty and limited options push people into unappealing jobs outside the sex sector – and they would never dream of opposing legislation to give those workers labour rights.

In some respects, this betrayal isn't really a surprise: the Irish trade union movement has a long history of selling out Irish workers, especially those at the margins. (They also have a history of an undemocratic, top-down style of leadership which seems to be reflected here as well: nobody I know in any of the ICTU-affiliated unions was asked for their opinion of this submission before it went in.) But summarily excluding a whole sector of the economy from their remit, and refusing to defend the labour rights of the (particularly vulnerable) people dependent on it? That's a new low for them, and it's a shocking one.

This article originally appeared on the Feminist Ire blog: <http://feministire.wordpress.com/>

They aim to create a space for those on the margins and between the lines, to question traditional ideas about identity, about sexuality, about who we are and where we should be going.





"Father Ted: It's not as if everyone's going to go off and join some mad religious cult just because we go off for a picnic for a couple of hours."

Father Dougal: God, Ted, I heard about those cults. Everyone dressing in black and saying our Lord's gonna come back and judge us all!

Father Ted: No... No, Dougal, that's us. That's Catholicism."

It's hard to describe the sense of revolt that those of us who were in our late teens or early twenties felt when Father Ted hit our television screens for the first time. We were probably the last generation of an Ireland that cowered in fear beneath the shadow of the bishop's cloak, who were brought to Knock on a rainy Sunday afternoon when it was sunny everywhere else, and who as children, might be cheeky to a teacher, but never to a priest.

In the early nineties things began to change. There wasn't a revolution in the sense of people in the streets, of government cracking and a system falling, but of a discernible change in peoples' attitudes. Whether it was the x-case, ex-pats returning from more progressive and bohemian climes, greater access to news and entertainment from across the globe, or a combination of those factors, change was in the air.

Your old road is rapidly agin'

I started secondary school in 1989. It was an all boys catholic school and the priest who taught us religion was obsessed with masturbation. When he'd preach about the evils of self pleasure and ask us all if we had committed that sin, his eyes would bulge, partially in indignation, and partially, we suspected because he took some perverse pleasure in it. None of us questioned him. None of us told our parents.

"the priest who taught us religion was obsessed with masturbation."

None of us admitted to the act of self pleasure, which no doubt, to a boy, all had dabbled in, and probably had felt guilty about it afterwards. After all, God was watching. God was a voyeur.

By the time 1994 swung around and the leaving cert loomed, we were drawing slips of paper out of a brown paper bag, with made up sins, tall stories to tell the priest when we went to our pre-annual school mass confession and I laughed when he told me I was going to hell for writing an essay about how Jesus was a communist. Years later we found out that Father Fire and Brimstone had left the priesthood.

It wasn't just that the boys of St. Pats in Navan had gotten older and bolder either. In 1992 Ireland voted in a referendum to allow abortion in very limited circumstances (though it took over twenty years to be

legislated for), condoms became available over the counter, and in 1995 we voted to legalise divorce. The following year, the last Magdalene laundry closed.

With so much change in such a short space of time, it would have been reasonable to expect that the influence of the church in affairs of the state would have completely crumbled by 2014. It hasn't though; The limited legislation on abortion allowed by the passing of the x-case referendum in 1992 was only passed in 2013, the waiting period for a divorce after separation is still four years and there still has been no justice for the survivors of the laundries. Worryingly, the church still plays a crucial role in education, in the molding of minds.

We are so perverted by an education

In 2010, Bishop Donal McKeon, wrote:

'All education is focussed, not merely on passing on useful information, nor just on training people for employment but on the formation of the whole person. Parents want to help their children grow, not just prepare them for work. The most important task that any of us will do is to be a human person as a social being. The Catholic Church has long established her own schools, because she considers them as a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole person, since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of the human person, and of history is developed and conveyed. Our faith-based education is thus not just a way to hand on Christian teaching about God. It explicitly involves "...the formation of the whole person, so that all may attain their eternal destiny and at the same time promote the common good of society."

"Those who wish to protect their children from the type of psychological abuse that comes from being indoctrinated in the Catholic "concept of the world", have their choices severely restricted"

There is something quite sinister in the idea of an organisation that played the role that it has in Irish society, that has covered up child sex abuse, subjugated women and pontificated against homosexuality having a "privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole person." Promoting the common good sounds very wholesome, but what "concept of the world, of the human person, and of history", is being conveyed?

This year secondary school students were taught that a rape victim can't become pregnant, abortion damages a woman's internal organs and that abortion destroys a woman's mental health by a group called Life, Pregnancy and Care (LPC), who were invited by schools to give talks on pregnancy advice. One student told how "The speaker presented one anecdotal story of a woman who had an abortion in her early 20s, got married around the age of 30, got pregnant and then had a breakdown and had her child taken away from her, Then she told another

in what must have been somewhat painful. The process was repeated with the three other girls (and the same guy, with the same piece of Sellotape). This was supposed to demonstrate the effect of having sex before marriage. The Sellotape collects hair and is no longer useful."iii Students were also warned that watching pornography was akin to being a serial killer.

Far from promoting the common good, the Catholic Church and connected groups like LPC and PHI, serve up a particularly sordid and twisted "concept of the world (and) the human person." It is not, however, only in the molding of minds that the church plays a baleful role.

I am Zuul. I am the Gatekeeper.

It's no secret that the Catholic church is anti-choice. We're used to seeing the organisation in this light through the prism of the fight for abortion rights. Ca-

der the patronage of the Minister for Education and Skills. In total, religious faith based schools account for 96% of primary schools in the state. While non-denominational bodies make up the bulk of patrons of the 116 new primary schools opened since 1997, Catholic Church patronage still accounts for a quarter of these.

The restrictions on the type of education a child can avail of that results from religious patronage is one thing, but it also means that access to education is restricted. With effective control of almost 90% of primary schools, the Catholic church is the gatekeeper of the education system. This means that it can exercise, as Kitty Holland put it in a recent article for the Irish Times, "a religiously based exclusion at children as young as four."iv Both the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland, prioritise children of their own faith on waiting lists, meaning that children with no religion who have been signed up for enrollment from birth, by the age of four are still way down on the waiting list, with no prospect of a place.

As Kitty Holland points out in the same article, "The church could not exert the influence it does without the co-operation of the state."

Irish State has been repeatedly castigated for allowing this discrimination against children to continue, by the United Nations in 2006, 2008 and again in 2011, when its Human Rights Committee noted with concern that the dominance of denominational education was "depriving many parents and children who so wish to have access to secular primary education".

Despite the fact that faith-based enrollment policies are viewed internationally as discriminatory, there is no attempt by schools to even make a pretense of equal access. And it isn't just the Catholic Church who discriminates. One parent who was attempting to enroll their child in a Church of Ireland school, described her experience in an ESRI report "...the secretary rang me back a few weeks later and she was saying 'on the form, you wrote that you were of no religion. And I said 'Yeah, well we are of no religion' and she said 'Look, I have to tell you that you just won't get a place if you write that...If you write any religion at all, you'll be further up the pecking order than if you write none'"v

In most cases where faith-based criteria are applied to school enrollment policy, children who are of no religion end up on the bottom of the list, with children of whatever religion runs the school at the top. Understandably, with the Catholic Church controlling almost 90% of school bodies, parents who would prefer not to get their children baptised to secure a place, often relent. It seems the Conservative MP for Dublin, John Vance was on to something, when he said during a debate in the Westminster parliament in 1871, that "home rule in Ireland, would prove to be "Rome rule."

I am the Keymaster! The Destructor is coming.

The discriminatory nature of faith-based school enrollment policies notwithstanding, there is nothing illegal about the practice. The church could not exert the influence it does without the co-operation of the state. It is the state that holds the keys to exchequer funding and the legal framework that religious schooling is built on.



story, similar to that, about a woman who got pregnant and aborted again because she didn't feel she deserved to have a child."ii

Another Catholic group, Pure in Heart Ireland (PHI), has been traveling around the country giving talks in schools on chastity. PHI, has its headquarters in the same building as the notorious anti-choice lobby group, the Iona Institute, who achieved nationwide infamy recently when they received damages from RTE for being described as homophobic on national television, despite the fact that they stringently oppose marriage equality.

PHI's promotion of chastity in at least one instance involved two student's being sellotaped together, then told that this represented a sexual relationship. Their break-up "was demonstrated by one of the speakers ripping the Sellotape off their wrists,

tholicism has had a big part to play in the regressive policies of the Irish state that restrict bodily autonomy for anyone with a womb. However, the church also restricts choice in other areas, health care for example, with the patronage of hospitals, and of course, education.

Those who wish to protect their children from the type of psychological abuse that comes from being indoctrinated in the Catholic "concept of the world", have their choices severely restricted, particularly at primary level. According to a 2011 report by the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO), out of a total of 3,169 primary schools in the state, the Catholic church were patrons of 2,841, that is, 89.65%. Other religious bodies accounted for 197 schools, 174 of which were Church of Ireland. In contrast, there were only 131 schools run by secular bodies, 58 of which were Educate Together, with only 9 un-

///// WARPED VISIONS: RELIGION IN THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM /////

The law that governs who can enter a school, and probably more importantly, who cannot, comes from the Education Act, 1998 in Section 9, which states that a school must “establish and maintain an admissions policy which provides for maximum accessibility to the school”. So far, so good.

This Act also contains Section 29 which provides for appeals by parents (or students who have reached the age of 18) to the Secretary General of the Department, which includes refusal to enroll a student in a school as a decision that may be appealed. Decisions taken by schools in relation to the suspension or permanent exclusion of a student can also be appealed under this provision. So if the law calls for “maximum accessibility” and allows for appeal on grounds of unfair refusal to enroll, how are religious bodies able to discriminate on the basis of the possession of a baptismal cert? Well, there's a catch.

“One chink of light in the recent past has been the establishment of Educate Together schools.”

Section 19 of the Education Welfare Act 2000 provides that the Board of Management shall not refuse to admit a student, except where such refusal is in accordance with the admission policy of the school concerned. Confused? No, you didn't misread that. Schools have to admit everyone, apart from the sort of child they'd prefer not to. Essentially, they can do as they please when it comes to admissions, and guess what? Catholic schools have a Catholics first admissions policy, COI schools have a COI first policy and so on and so forth.

But wait. School enrollment policies and practices are also covered by equality legislation (Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004) which prohibits discrimination on nine distinct grounds, gender; marital status; family status; age; disability; race; sexual orientation; religious belief, and membership of the traveller community.

But despite the fact that the Equal Status Acts specify that a school may not discriminate in the admission of a student, or discriminate in the terms and conditions of admission, once again, certain exemptions apply. Single sex schools are recognised and here, the law provides for an exemption in relation to gender. A second exemption concerns schools where the objective is to provide education in an environment that promotes certain religious values.

When this algebraic equation of legislation is multiplied, divided, added and subtracted, the upshot is that, a school that has this objective can admit a student of a particular religious denomination in preference to other students. Such a school can also refuse to admit a student who is not of that religion, provided it can prove that this refusal is essential to “maintain the ethos of the school.” Schools therefore have a free rein to discriminate against, to exclude and to decide the fate of children of four and five years old.

Furthermore, they have the power to effectively force parents to baptise children in order to gain admission to their schools and once they have exclusive access to these young minds, they have carte blanche to “promote certain religious values”. All of this, and they get to do it with taxpayer funding. Despite the fact that the Minister for Education, Ruairí Quinn,

launched a public consultation on inclusiveness in primary schools, his department is also consulting on a new Education (Admissions to Schools) Bill, the draft of which retains schools' right to exclude children who don't meet the required religious criteria.

Who ya gonna call?

For parents who don't want to have their children baptised into the Catholic church, who don't want to have their children indoctrinated and exposed to psychological abuse and harmful attitudes towards sexuality and gender, among other things, the options, particularly at primary level are few and far between. One chink of light in the recent past has been the establishment of Educate Together schools,



which account for 42 of the 116 schools opened since 1997 and amount to 58 schools in total.

Educate together are multi-denominational schools. They teach the primary school curriculum which includes half an hour a day spent on “faith formation”. Educate together schools however, use this time to teach what they call the “learn together curriculum.” This curriculum is broken into four strands. The first concentrates on “understanding and awareness of right and wrong and a heightened awareness of social, ethical and moral standards through reflecting on the meaning and purposes of life.”

The second aims “to develop in children a critical knowledge, understanding and awareness of issues relating to human rights, equality, culture and diversity, social justice and social inclusiveness and to empower them to make a difference.”vi The third strand of the curriculum is where it comes closest to religious instruction. The belief systems strand however, covers the six biggest world religions, along with atheism, agnosticism and humanism. In the fourth strand, children are taught environmental ethics.

A complete overhaul of the school curriculum, indeed, in how children learn, is desirable from an anarchist perspective, but as things stand, Educate Together seems to be the best we have. The fact that there are more of these schools opening now, than Catholic schools is a positive. But 58 schools is not enough for a country in which 270,000 people described themselves as having “no religion” on the last census. The major shift in attitudes towards “traditional catholic values”, sexuality, bodily autonomy and marriage that occurred during the 1990's has yet to be reflected in laws pertaining to the education system.

While it might be difficult to immediately remove the church from the patronage of schools, for want of a replacement, without revolutionary change, in the here and now, it is important to work towards undermining the power of Catholicism in education. The first step should be to vigorously oppose practices that discriminate at point of access to education. In the twenty first century, there should be no room for a system that values some children more than others and that would deny a child the right to learn and

develop. Secondly, there should be an opt-out from religious instruction, so that children do not have to be exposed to warped ideologies based on superstition, misogyny, homophobia and unhealthy attitudes towards sexuality.

These should be the first steps, not only in removing the influence of religion from the lives of children but in changing the way we think about learning. The ultimate aim must be to do away with “an education which from infancy seeks to kill in us the spirit of revolt, and to develop that of submission to authority”vii and replace it with one that allows each child to develop themselves to their full potential, as free human beings, without gods, without masters.



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Review: Into the Shadows – Britain's dirty war in Ireland

WORDS: SEAN MATTHEWS

The recent BBC documentary 'Panorama: Britain's Secret Terror Force' may have once again put a spotlight on the extent of British state sponsored terrorism in the North and the activities of its various shadowy forces; but the level of orchestration, impunity, collusion and cover up is yet to be truly uncovered.

The documentary revealing the activities of the Military Reaction Force (MRF) was aired just a day after Northern Irish Attorney General John Larkin called for an amnesty on atrocities committed during the Irish troubles. He may be right to break this taboo, but was he lobbied by British soldiers and their friends who fear justice taking its course as this evidence comes to light?

The Military Reaction Force, Military Reconnaissance Force or Mobile Reconnaissance Force (MRF) was a covert intelligence-gathering and counter-insurgency terror unit of the British Army active in Belfast, Northern Ireland, during 'the troubles'. The unit was formed during the summer of 1971 and operated until late 1972 or early 1973, in the midst of no-go areas set up across working class communities particularly in predominantly 'nationalist' areas. It was during a time when the Provisional IRA was at a peak in terms of influence and membership but was also an era of growing sectarian conflict, shootings and daily bombings.

The MRF has its origins in ideas and techniques developed by British Army Brigadier Sir Frank Kitson, who created "counter gangs" to defeat the Mau Mau in Kenya. He was the author of two books on counter-insurgency tactics: *Gangs & Counter Gangs* (1960) and *Low Intensity Operations* (1971). From 1970 to 1972, Kitson served in Northern Ireland as com-

"The MRF has its origins in ideas and techniques developed by "counter gangs" to defeat the Mau Mau in Kenya."

mander of the 39th Infantry Brigade. These manuals reveal the extent of Britain's colonial mindset and its extensive operations to defeat insurgencies from Malaysia to adapted present day military occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The MRF was based at Palace Barracks in the Belfast suburb of Hollywood and its first commander was Captain Arthur Watchus. In June 1972, he was succeeded by Captain James 'Hamish' McGregor. It was split into sections, which were each commanded by sergeants or sergeant-majors who had served in the Special Air Service (SAS), Special Boat Service (SBS), the Royal Marines and the Parachute Regiment. The unit consisted of up to 40 men, and a few women, handpicked from throughout the British Army.

Many details about the unit's modus operandi have been revealed by former members while others have yet to be confirmed such as involvement in the New Lodge six massacres and the McGurk's bombing which left fifteen innocent civilians dead and a further seventeen wounded. The book *Killing For Britain*

(2009), written by former UVF member 'John Black', claims that the MRF organized the bombing and helped the bombers get in and out of the area. Local people claimed security forces helped the bombers by removing the checkpoints an hour before the attack.

One of the bombers—Robert Campbell—said that their original target had been The Gem, a nearby pub that was allegedly linked to the Official IRA. It is claimed the MRF plan was to help the UVF the bar, and then blame the bombing on the Provisional IRA. In an attempt to start a feud between the two IRA factions, diverting them from their fight against the security forces and draining their support. Campbell said that The Gem had security outside and, after waiting for almost an hour, they decided to bomb the nearest 'Catholic pub' instead. Immediately after, the security forces claimed that a bomb had accidentally exploded while being handled by IRA members inside McGurk's.

In 2012–13, a former MRF member using the cover name, 'Simon Cursey' gave a number of interviews in his book *MRF Shadow Troop*, about his time in the undercover unit. While full of the sort of macho bravado and heroism you would expect from a spy story, the book in itself is a fascinating read in terms of profiling the composition, psychology and activities of this de facto death squad. In it he describes the unit as 'a small undercover unit of three or nine man section, operating from a secret compound location near Belfast. There was only one officer and almost all the operational members of MRF held ranks ranging from lance corporal to WO2 (warrant officer, class 2). It was however, a 'flat', rather than hierarchal structure; and neither was it some 'rogue' unit as some liberal commentators have claimed as it was

///// REVIEW: INTO THE SHADOWS – BRITAIN'S DIRTY WAR IN IRELAND /////

directly accountable to the GOCNI (General Officer Commanding Northern Ireland). For 'Simon' this was 'an incredible simple chain of command, cutting out almost the entirety of the Army structure.' Indeed this structure of command to the upper echelons of the British establishment raises further questions concerning the level of orchestration and who ultimately sanctioned operations?

The real responsibility for these atrocities lies close to the door of the cabinet and 'untouchable' senior soldiers of the day, whether past or present. General Sir Mike Jackson, former Chief of the General Staff of the British Army and former commander of the Parachute regiment has admitted he knew of the MRF and Brigadier Gordon Kerr, who ran the previously-uncovered Force Research Unit (FRU), Military advisers Colonel David Stirling and counter-insurgency dirty tricks 'guru' General Frank Kitson as well, are unlikely to have been far from the crime scene.

Egged on by Ministry of Defence advisers such as Kitson, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and the Defence secretary of the day must have signed off MRF's shooting of innocent unarmed civilians with a nod and a wink, on the understanding that nothing would be officially revealed until recently. Given that the MRF was officially confirmed in Parliament in March 1994 as well as the recent report highlighting the destroying of documents in former British colonies such as in Kenya only serves to highlight the length our ruling classes will go to conceal their crimes against humanity.

While the MRF engaged in terror tactics against the mainly nationalist community in terms of random drive by shootings against innocent unarmed civilians in an attempt to inflame sectarian conflict; this unit and level of British state collusion was not isolated incident but fitted a broader pattern and agenda from the Cairo gang in the 1920s to the SAS to make sure its Britain's strategic interests are secure at all costs.

As we now know from countless enquires and accounts such as Bloody Sunday, Ballymurphy massacre, and the loyalist collusion into assassination of Pat Finucane that Britain that far from being an impartial 'peace-keeper' between two 'tribes', the state

was involved in an orchestrated campaign of state terrorism, torture and impunity without trial by its unofficial and official army of mercenaries. This is in stark contrast to the recent Smithwick report into allegations of Garda force collusion into IRA assassination of two RUC officers which served as a sop to reactionary unionism and useful distraction for widespread British state collusion.

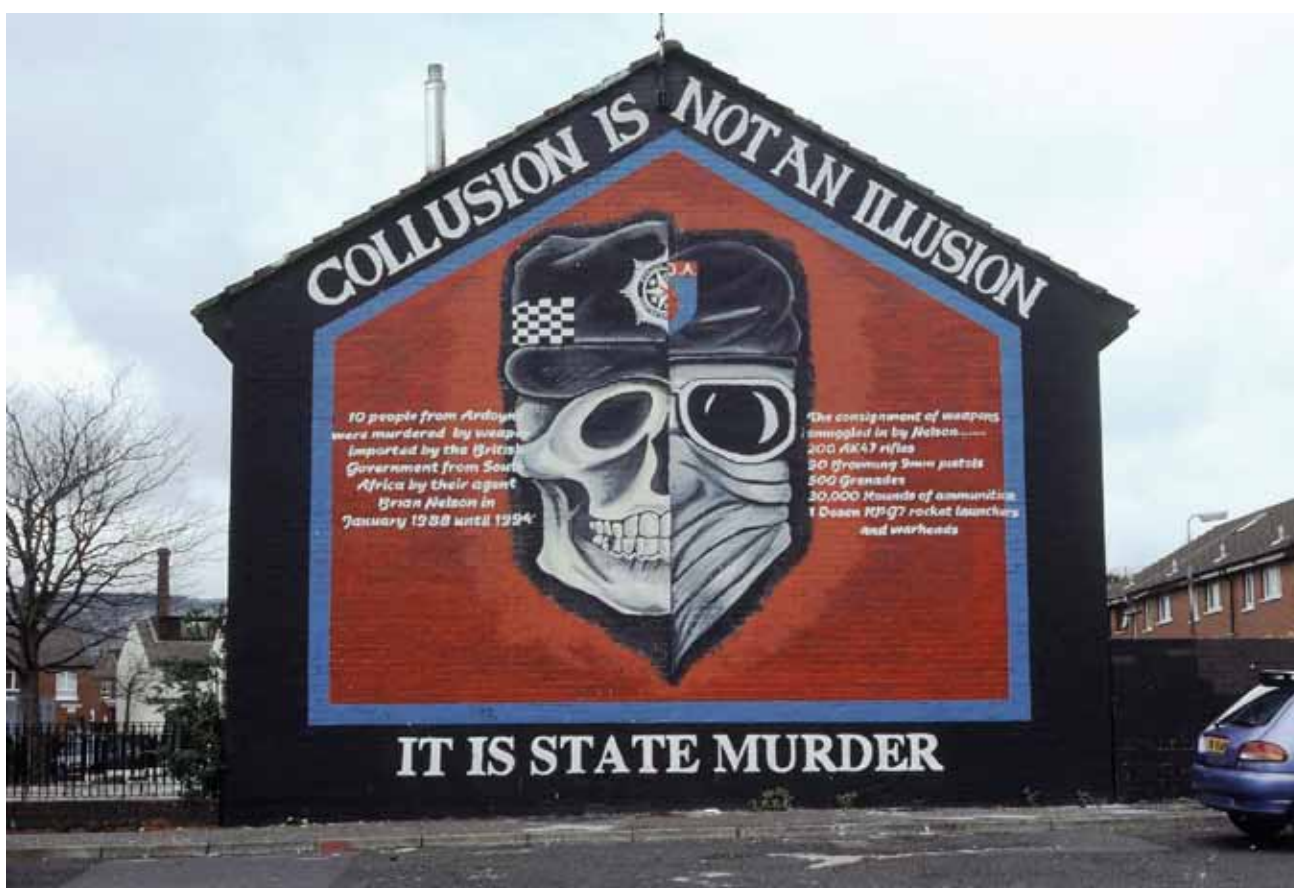
This latest documentary is just the tip of the iceberg and comes after secret documents published by the Pat Finucane Centre in 2011 highlighting endemic and systematic collusion between the British army regiments and loyalist paramilitaries in the North and that up to 15% of the Ulster Defence Regiment total membership had loyalist paramilitary links with the tacit knowledge of British Army senior officers. Last month the Pat Finucane Centre book 'Lethal Allies: British Collusion in Ireland' was published. Drawing on previously unpublished reports from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI)'s Historical Enquiries Team, author Anne Cadwallader retraced the steps of the so-called 'Mid-Ulster' loyalist gang, claiming it carried out more than 120 savage sectarian killings over five years from 1972.

Its attacks ranged from individual shootings to the Dublin and Monaghan bombings. Most of the gang's victims were Catholic civilians and Ms Cadwallader points out that large numbers of the killings directly or indirectly involved members of the now-defunct Royal Ulster Constabulary or the Ulster Defence Regiment.

This entire dark chapter in Northern Ireland in many ways validates the anarchist analysis that that state institutionalises misery, injustice and violence in its broadest sense and no amount token reforms of window dressing past or present can hide this ugly reality. The conflict that blighted so many lives, families and divided communities served as an important laboratory for counter insurgency repression and surveillance with its lessons being applied today by 'counter-terrorism' advisors from Britain to Israel. British police colleges are now training Britain's old colonial powers from Bahrain, to Kenya and Sri Lanka in the niceties of destroying organized opposition while working alongside covert US special force in supporting its proxy warlords and militias.

In the US, the Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), which is directly accountable to the Whitehouse, continues to wage and re-define a global battle of aggression from Yemen, to Somalia, to Afghanistan and beyond against its perceived enemies from secret prisons and rendition, sponsoring death squads to indiscriminate drone attacks wiping out whole families; 'Somehow, in front of our eyes, undeclared wars have been launched in countries across the globe; foreigners and citizens alike are assassinated by presidential decree; the war on terror transformed into a self-fulfilling prophecy,'. "How does a war like this ever end, and what happens to us when we realise what was hidden in plain sight?"

You will often hear people again and again saying of Ireland's 'troubles' that this occurred a long time ago and that we must move on. The reality is the British army still continues to occupy part of Ireland using all means at its disposal including the use of shadowy forces such as the Special Reconnaissance Regiment and MI5 under the command of the PSNI while the Good Friday Agreement signed in 1998 has still not solved the root causes of the conflict or sectarian division because it was not intended to do so. We may shrug our shoulders and turn our backs on the past but it will always come back with a vengeance. The task is to build and fight for a free and equal society that will finally bury everything that is rotten with the present.



Review: David Graebers 'The Democracy Project'.

Many of us have an Occupy story. Mine took place in New York on March 17th of 2012, the six-month anniversary of the first occupation of Zuccotti Park, and the three-month anniversary of its eviction. I joined about five hundred or so Occupiers who had gathered after dark on the Manhattan side of Brooklyn Bridge. As we marched the three blocks or so to reclaim Zuccotti Park, NYPD's finest, fully armed, literally lined the street each step of the way. And in the park itself a surveillance tower loomed overhead.

What were we doing that was so dangerous that it necessitated a SWAT team on stand-by? No doubt it had something to do with the chanting and singing that started spontaneously once we arrived: 'Ah! Aquí! An-ti-cap-it-al-is-ta! Ah! Aquí! An-ti-cap-it-al-is-ta!' Later, there was an attempt to re-camp in Union Square but the following morning, the police arrested or moved on anyone who attempted to remain. I remember a park groundskeeper, an elderly African-American man, spat on the ground as we watched two officers throw a young blue-haired woman into the back of a police van. 'Same old story', he said.

Declarations of occupation

David Graeber's Occupy story is 'about the possibility of democracy in America [and] the opening up of the radical imagination that Occupy allowed' (p. xv). 'The Democracy Project' is told in five chapters. Chapter one – 'The Beginning is Near' – provides a first-hand account of the early days of 'Occupy' from the summer of 2011 onwards. Graeber gleefully de-

"Those who wanted prefigurative politics ignored Marxist-Leninist central committee proposals for 'popular front' marches"

scribes how those who wanted prefigurative politics ignored Marxist-Leninist central committee proposals for 'popular front' marches and instead seized the initiative themselves, declaring for a city-square occupation along the lines of Tahrir or Syntagma.

Graeber does not downplay his own organising role here: he helped coin the slogan 'We are the 99%' and we are even presented with the emails to prove it. For the most part though, he emphasises the courage, determination and hard work of those dedicated hundreds who dug in at Zuccotti Park that September and refused to budge despite atrocious conditions and police terror.

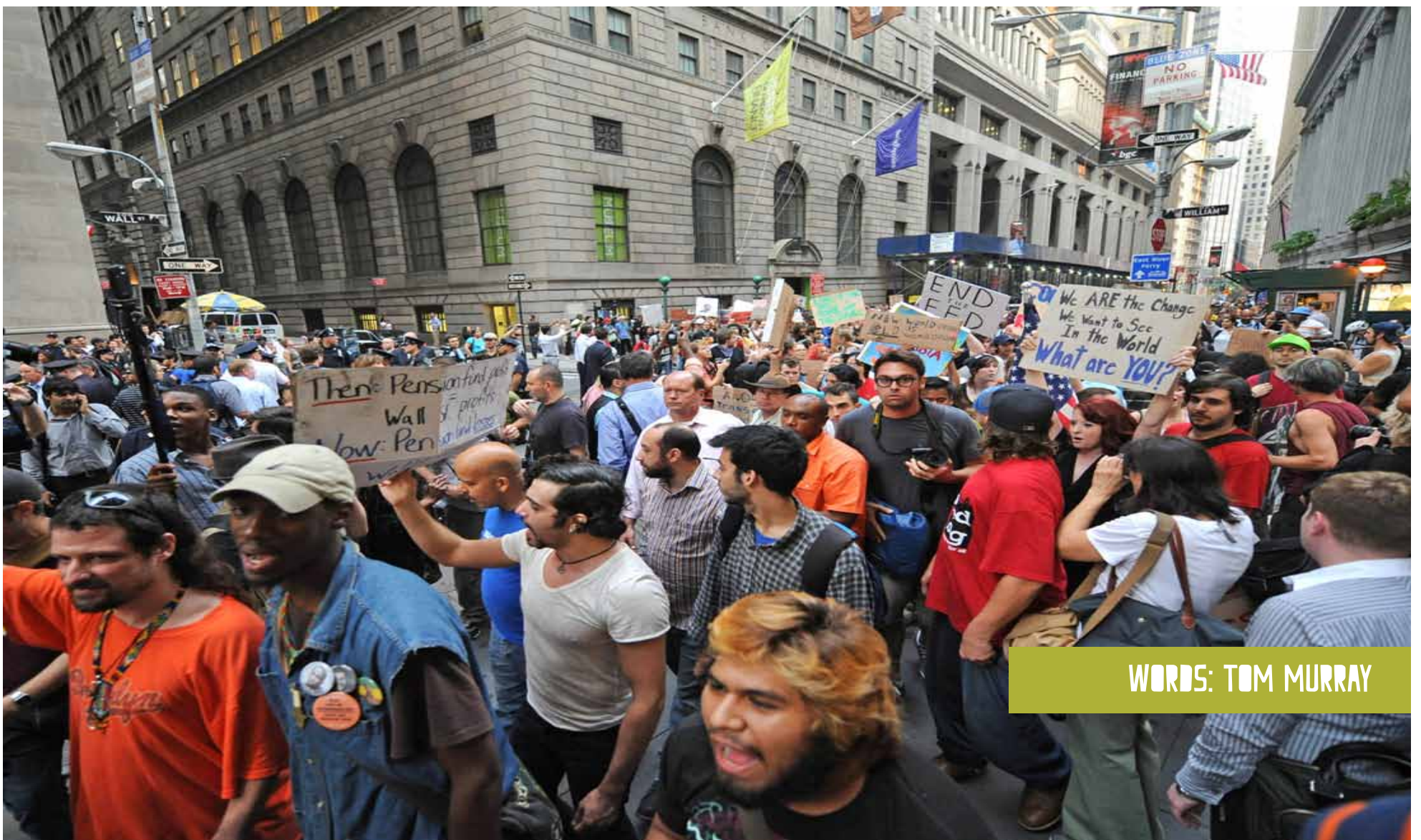
Within weeks, Occupy had spread to some 800 cities across the world. Chapter two explores why this was the case. Notably, the movement – initially, predomi-

nantly composed of indebted graduates and under-employed – spoke directly to America's wider working class. Highlighting the 'predatory and unpopular nature of the financial extortion racket' resonated in a country where the average household spends 18% of its income on servicing loans and where one in seven citizens is being pursued by a debt collection agency. Among the hundreds of individual posts to the 'We are the 99%' tumblr, the most frequent word used was 'job', the second, 'debt', but that almost all the rest referred to necessities of life, homes, food, health care, education, children.

In this context, Graeber claims, Occupy succeeded not despite the 'anarchist element' but because of it. Its stubborn refusal to make demands of existing institutions not only attacked 'institutionalised bribery' as the basis of contemporary electoral politics, it also tapped into people's 'genuine indignation at being cut off from the means of doing good'. In the US, the populist right, notably the Tea Party, had tended to monopolise this indignation; it now had a rival.

Spaces of intercultural improvisation

In the second half of the book, Graeber shows how this apparently new story is, in fact, quite an old one. Chapter three – 'The Covert History of Democracy' – argues that, in essence, democracy 'is just the belief that humans are fundamentally equal and ought to be allowed to manage their collective affairs in an egalitarian fashion, using whatever means appear most conducive. That, and the hard work of bringing arrangements based on those principles into being'. On Graeber's account, democracy is not an intellectual inheritance, Western tradition or particular



WORDS: TOM MURRAY



mode of government but is rather a constant feature of 'spaces of intercultural improvisation' outside of state or church control. In outlining how various spaces of this kind have arisen in the U.S., Graeber links the democratic practices of the indigenous Native Americans, the frontier societies and the pirate vessels of the Atlantic to the popular assemblies and revolts of the American Revolution.

At stake here is a clever inversion of both American exceptionalism and liberal political theory. People's freedoms are not magically protected for their being enshrined in a constitution or recognised by the state but rather owe, first and foremost, to people actively exercising them.

With this in mind, Chapter four – 'How Change Happens' – compares Occupy's attempts to exercise new freedoms with contemporary revolutionary movements, mostly from the Global South. Here, Graeber identifies a revolutionary 'dual-power strategy' with that of creating liberated spaces outside of the existing order and achieving 'concrete benefits' for the 99% simultaneously.

In practice, the challenge centres on constructing effective alliances beyond the utopian enclave of activists without compromising on democratic or horizontal decision-making. Graeber contrasts Occupy's consensus decision-making to the Sadr city strategy in Iraq where grassroots institutions are defended militarily; to the San Andrés strategy in Mexico where the Zapatistas negotiated a separate zone of influence with the Mexican government; and to the El Alto strategy in Bolivia where indigenous social movements, by threatening to topple the government if they go against their elections promises, bolster their political representatives' negotiating position with capital. To varying degrees, while extracting concessions and delivering 'concrete benefits', these strategies present clear limits to horizontality.

Instead, Occupy Wall Street, Graeber suggests, is most like the 'Buenos Aires' strategy of creating horizontal practices in order to de-legitimate existing political institutions; material concerns follow secondarily to democratic process. The final chap-

"the intentionally provocative assumption that Occupy 'worked' is the central point of the book yet also the one most open to question"

ter – 'Breaking the Spell' – interprets the organising tendencies and imaginative horizons at work in Occupy to project the ongoing 'transformation of political common sense'. On this basis, the revolutionary horizon of the early 21st century might involve some combination of the following: a debt jubilee; an end to the productivist-consumerist work ethic in favour of environmental sustainability and balanced job-life complexes; a shift in labour towards value-creation for human needs; a radical decentralisation of administration and a radical expansion of the baseline communism of everyday life.

An ounce of theory, a tonne of anecdotes

Overall, 'The Democracy Project' combines political theory, history and economics with first-hand anecdotes, FAQ sections and a good sense of fun. The result is a very clear and easy to read analysis, consistently attentive to the power relations at stake in both the micro-politics of occupying Zuccotti Park as well as the macro-politics of global political economy.

Any academic can trace how the financial power of the 1% depends on U.S. military might abroad and on the courts, repossession agencies and sheriffs at home; it takes an anarchist activist to convey the true horror of challenging these structures through electoralism, or speechifying celebrities. This realist analysis is central to understanding why the radi-

cal horizon suggested by Occupy, howsoever utopian it might at first appear, is absolutely necessary. It also informs why Occupy collapsed: low-level police terror and media smear campaigns prepared the ground for the evictions while, culturally, a decade of post-9/11 security norms allowed liberals to look the other way as the police infringed basic civil liberties to destroy the camps and to make arrests.

In terms of criticism, the intentionally provocative assumption that Occupy 'worked' is the central point of the book yet also the one most open to question. After the initial moment of outrage and collective self-help, the movement appeared to stall. Encampments transformed into a meta-movement primarily concerned with defending the right to occupy public space. In this respect, Graeber comes close to acknowledging the limits to Occupy's securing 'concrete benefits' for the 99% but almost instantly insists that the movement's primary function was to transform political common sense. There are two issues here. First, how does he know? I feel that Graeber too readily discovers his own revolutionary vision in what was a movement with an extraordinarily diverse range of participants and political attitudes. Occupy's adoption of horizontal means was important but to take this as proof of horizontal ends strains the evidence presented.

Secondly, even if we accept Occupy's revolutionary potential, Graeber glosses over the practical limitations of horizontalism as a means of social transformation. The suspicion lingers that movements based on square occupations and horizontal assemblies face overwhelming challenges in terms of undermining or exhausting themselves in the long run. This is not simply about police and media hostility; it is also about finding ways to secure ongoing benefits to members, including material ones.

Bread and revolutionary principles

'The Democracy Project' clearly identifies the tension in practice between maintaining horizontal principles and achieving concrete benefits but would itself gain, I think, from a more holistic evaluation of how the latter is necessary for the former. There are both practical and principled reasons why anarchist visions of transformation have usually prioritised the general strike and expropriation, or people directly seizing and collectively working the means of production. As Kropotkin put it, revolutionary principles are impossible to sustain without the conquest of bread.

In sum, Graeber's overall assessment of Occupy's true significance – a culture shock – is probably right. Occupy reminded us that we need not resign ourselves to having our politics acted upon us. On an unprecedented scale, in occupied squares and cities around the world, people re-discovered and re-invented old habits of self-organisation, and collective action. For a brief period, the movement struck a blow against the prevailing cynicism, a necessary function of neoliberalism's 'relentless campaign against the human imagination' and a powerful force for reinforcing individual isolation in workplaces and communities.

In the years since Occupy, as state and capital continue to isolate, exploit, oppress and repress us, we are still angry but perhaps more tired now, and less hopeful. Books like 'The Democracy Project' remind us to take heart. We are many while they are few; there will be new opportunities for revolt; and, above all, the new world struggling to emerge is well worth fighting for.





WORDS: SUN-EARTHER MARK ANARCHO DOWLING OF NAVAN

REVIEW: THIS SIDE OF THE SUBLIME IAIN M. BANKS' THE CULTURE SERIES

When Iain Banks shuffled off this mortal coil in June of last year, sci-fi geeks in general and lefty sci-fi geeks in particular, mourned the fact that there wasn't a backup copy of his personality stored somewhere. In the universe he created in his acclaimed The Culture series of sci-fi novels, that almost certainly would have been the case. Transplanted into a new body, biological or artificial, or even brought back in virtual reality or as an adjunct to the mind of a Culture ship, he could have continued writing the books we've come to know and love for another few hundred years.

Written under the name Iain M. Banks, to distinguish his sci-fi from his other work, the Culture series describes an advanced, post-scarcity, post-human, space faring civilisation that could be described as libertarian communist.

There is no government, there are no laws, no private property and individuals are free to do almost anything, as long as they don't impinge on the freedom of others, or violate some unwritten rules about interference with other civilisations.

Not that interference is prohibited, on the contrary it's a way of life for the Culture. Unlike the Federation in Star Trek, there is no prime directive that prohibits altering the course of alien societies.

It is the interaction with other civilisations and the philosophical and moral dilemmas it poses, that forms the basis of the books of the series; That and explosions, chases, gun fights, sex and barbed humour.

Life, but not as we know it

Life in The Culture consists of roughly three types of entity – Biological post-human, drones and minds. The biologi-

cal types can't properly be described as a species. They are the decedents of seven or eight civilisations of humanoid space faring species federated to form a new civilisation consisting of roughly thirty trillion beings.

Having reached unimaginable heights of technological advancement, they decided to take their evolution into their own hands. Over the course of thousands of years of The Culture's existence, other civilisations joined, some humanoid, some not, making it impossible to distinguish individual species.

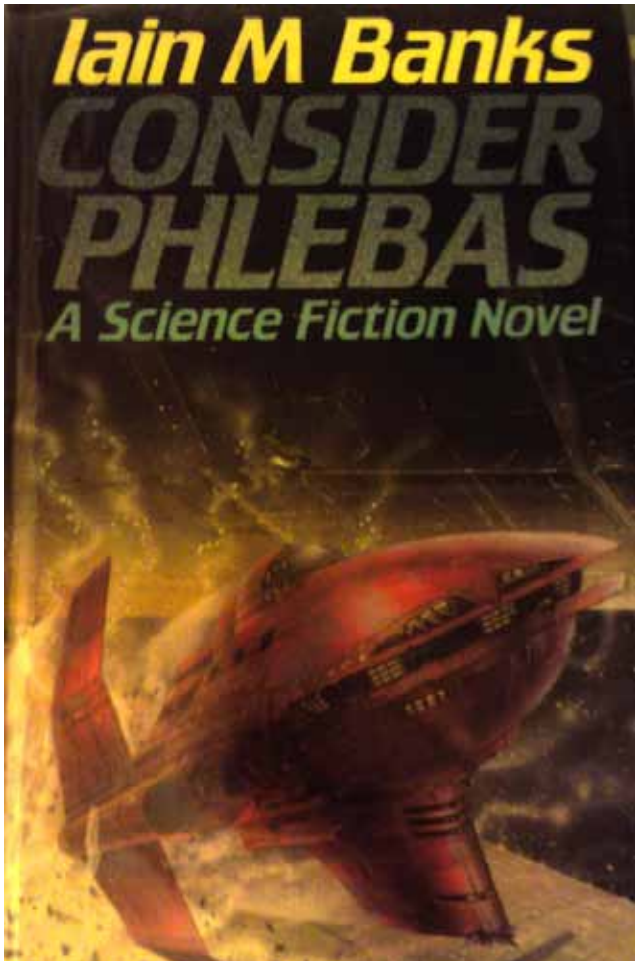
The Culture however is not like The Borg of Star Trek. There isn't an assimilatory sameness to all it's beings, far from it. There is little uniformity. Long life spans and the availability of biological enhancements allow citizens to change their form several times within their lifetime. Some opt for simple bodily improvements, others change gender or species several times over.

While some people make what are considered "unusual life choices", and become artificial intelligence, or even stranger, revert to "human basic", most opt for enhancements such as drug glands, the ability to switch off pain, grow extra limbs or in the case of members of 'Special Circumstances' – more about them later, weapons systems embedded in various parts of the body.

Drones, unlike what the name suggests, are comparable in intelligence and status to biological citizens of The Culture. This excludes drones created to do menial work, who are only regarded as proto-sentient and are therefore not considered citizens. The most interesting drones are ones in the service of "contact or "special circumstances" that include special armaments like "knife missiles". Despite the fact that drones are usually built for a specific purpose, they are given personalities so they can make life choices.

The most interesting citizens of the culture, and the ones who feature most often in the novels are the minds. Minds are artificial intelligences that are essentially the brains of the various class of spaceship that populate The Culture.

These range from civilian ships, like



"Throughout the series, Banks tackles philosophical problems that arise from an anarchist society existing within a wider galactic framework that does not share its values"



General Systems Vehicles (GSV), massive habitats that are home to billions of people, through General Contact Units (GCU), that effectively act as ambassadors to other civilisations, to military class ships like General Offensive Units (GOU), and Very Fast Pickets (VFP).

The Minds themselves are infinitely more intelligent than humans and drones. When Banks was asked if this is what gods would be like, he replied "If we're lucky". Though mostly benevolent, the Minds have a wicked sense of humour, which is reflected in the names they give the ships they inhabit – GSV Unfortunate Conflict of Evidence, GCU Just Read the Instructions, GCU A Series of Unlikely Explanations, dROU Frank Exchange of Views, GSV Anticipation of A New Lover's Arrival, the, and my personal favourite, VFP Outstanding Contribution to the Historical Process.

As well as on ships, citizens of The Culture live on Orbitals, vast wheel shaped artificial worlds where every desire is catered for. Very few live on actual planets, though most other species we encounter in the series do.

Anarchy in a hostile galaxy

If you are not familiar with the series, you may be asking why a society that can be broadly described as libertar-

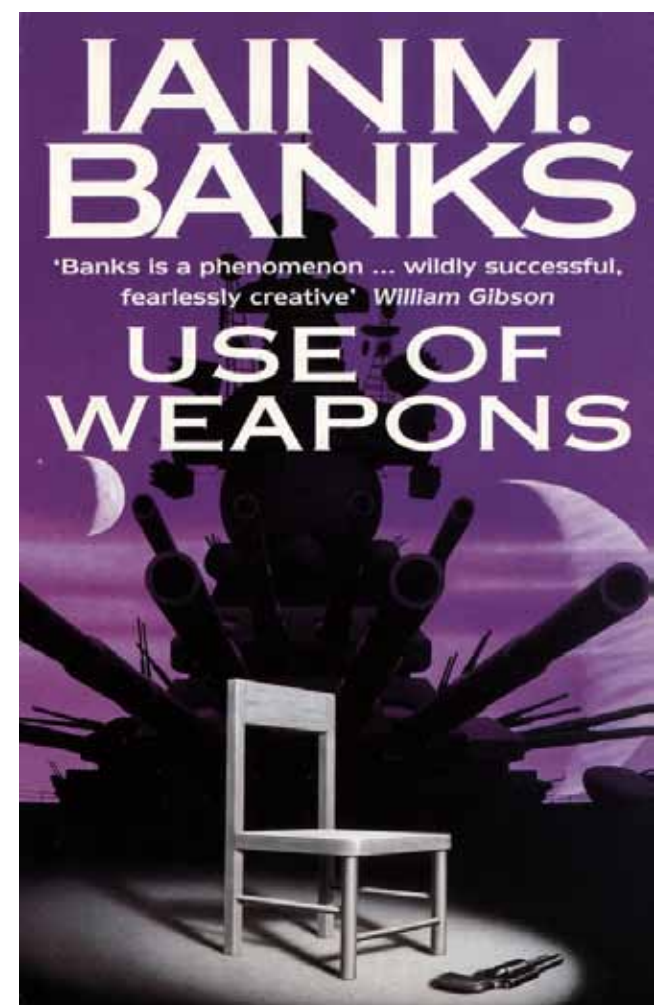
ian communist, needs military ships and drones and something called "Special Circumstances". Well, throughout the series, Banks tackles philosophical problems that arise from such a society existing within a wider galactic framework that does not share its values.

The first book of the series, Consider Phlebas, published in 1987, lays the groundwork for what is to come. The Culture is at war. The aggressor is the theocratic Idrian empire, the protagonist, Horza, a mercenary in their service. The Idrian's have begun to expand, to conquer other civilisations and assimilate them.

The culture feels duty bound to halt their expansion. Ships are retooled for war, Special Circumstances is established for covert operations and mercenaries are hired to do the work that is too dirty even for SC. Though the Culture eventually come out victorious (though the war has not yet ended by the end of the book), the experience leaves them constantly prepared for war.

Throughout the rest of the series, other philosophical problems are dealt with. In the novella, The State of the Art, the humanoid Dziel Sma and the GCU Arbitrary argue over whether to make contact with Earth. To aid the decision,

agents are sent to various parts of the planet to gather information, while the ship monitors telecommunications networks (a comical situation arises when the ship sends in a request to the BBC World Service to play David Bowie's Space Oddity, "for the good ship Arbitrary and all who sail in her"). In the



"It's the journey that is important rather than the destination and you get the feeling that The Culture like to climb mountains because they're there"

end, the citizens of Earth in 1977 are considered too erratic, hostile and war like to contact, but they leave agents to continue monitoring them. It is insinuated elsewhere that contact is made in 2100 AD.

Other questions that are raised are the problem of boredom in a post-scarcity society, the problem of ends and means, if very advanced simulated AI environments can be considered new universes with sentient beings – The Culture think they are and leave them running when the scenario that the simulation was set up for is finished and how much interference is too much interference.

It's not quite sublime

The final book in the series that Iain Banks wrote before he died, *The Hydrogen Sonata*, deals with what happens to civilisations when they have done all there is to do and feel that they no longer serve a purpose. The civilisation in question is the Gzilt, who almost joined

The Culture at it's foundation but mysteriously changed their minds at the last minute. The solution is to Sublime. To move to another plane of existence beyond the physical. The hitch in the plan is that their whole civilisation has been built on "The Book of Truth", their version of the bible that was so accurate in it's predictions, and made them feel so unique, that it prevented them from joining the culture.

The problem that transpires is that the Book of Truth is a lie, a mischievous prank played by rogue elements from within an even older civilisation. The protagonist, Vyr Cossant, a Gzilt citizen, and a host of Culture minds attempt to find out who is trying to cover it up and what to do with the information.

At times when you get to the end of one

of these books, despite the situations described in their pages being serious, not much has really changed. It's the journey that is important rather than the destination and you get the feeling that The Culture like to climb mountains because they're there. Banks also explained that he uses this device to show that individuals don't really have a lot of power to change things on their own. There are no Luke Skywalkers or James T. Kirks who can dramatically alter the course of history. As he said of *Consider Phlebas*:

"There's a big war going on in [*Consider Phlebas*], and various individuals and groups manage to influence its outcome. But even being able to do that doesn't ultimately change things very much. At the book's end, I have a section pointing this out by telling what happened after the war, which was an attempt to pose the question, 'What was it all for?' I guess this approach has to do with my reacting to the cliché of SF's 'lone protagonist.'

You know, this idea that a single individual can determine the direction of entire civilizations. It's very, very hard for a lone person to do that. And it sets you thinking what difference, if any, it would have made if Jesus Christ, or Karl Marx or Charles Darwin had never been. We just don't know."

There are ten books in total, each one is a gem. If you like sci-fi that isn't dystopian, but you still like a bit of adventure, black humour and a bit of philosophy thrown in, you won't regret getting into them.



Review: 100 Years Later: The Legacy of the 1913 Lockout.

History has traditionally been viewed through the prism of 'great leaders' or 'powerful men' (and it usually is men). In recent years, however, the importance of community or local history – and the contributions of 'ordinary' people to great events – has been recognised. To paraphrase Jim Larkin "The great leaders only appear great because of the commitment, sacrifice and energy of ordinary people".

"100 Years Later – The Legacy of the 1913 Lockout", edited by Mary Muldowney and Ida Milne and published by Seven Towers, is a strong and powerful contribution to shining a light on the "hardship and heroism that was part of that epic struggle."

Bravery and sacrifice

In her introduction to the book Mary Muldowney writes "The many achievements in employment rights that were a feature of the twentieth century are a constant reminder of the bravery and the sacrifices of members of the labour movement in the 100 years since the Lockout that have consistently inspired and encouraged those who came after them. In 2013 we owe it to ourselves and our children to recognise the legacy and to keep that spirit of 1913 in our hearts as we tackle the considerable challenges that face us."

This book consists of a series of articles based on interviews carried out by the 1913 Alternative Visions Oral History group – who came together in September 2012 with the objective of learning the skills, techniques and ethical issues involved in collecting oral histories. In this they succeeded brilliantly and between them the contributors to this book have brought together a real sense that the Lockout was a time of great turmoil, trouble, sacrifice and excitement – and one that has left a lasting legacy, not just in terms of the bigger political and trade union picture but also in terms of family and community memory.

Memories and legacy

The book doesn't just look at memories of 1913 – although it does that. It also explores its legacy and its effect on subsequent decades of trade unionism and trade union battles. Nowhere is this more obvious than in Chapter 8 in which Joe Mooney and Sarah Lundberg interview members of the Dublin Dockland community about their family memories and stories of the Lockout.

"The Lockout might have officially ended in January 1914," they write, "but for many there was no ceasefire. This was a conflict that would send echoes down through the years, and carry with it the motifs, lessons and antagonisms that would become part of a way of life."

Everybody who knows anything about the 1913 Lockout will have heard of James Nolan – one of the martyrs of the time, having been batoned to death by 5 policemen on 30th August 1913, just 4 days into the Lockout. Alan Mac Simóin's contribution (Chapter 3) brings the story of Nolan's death, its impact on his community, and its lasting legacy in terms of his family's memory to life through an interview with Moira Crawford, whose great grandmother was a sister of Nolan's wife.

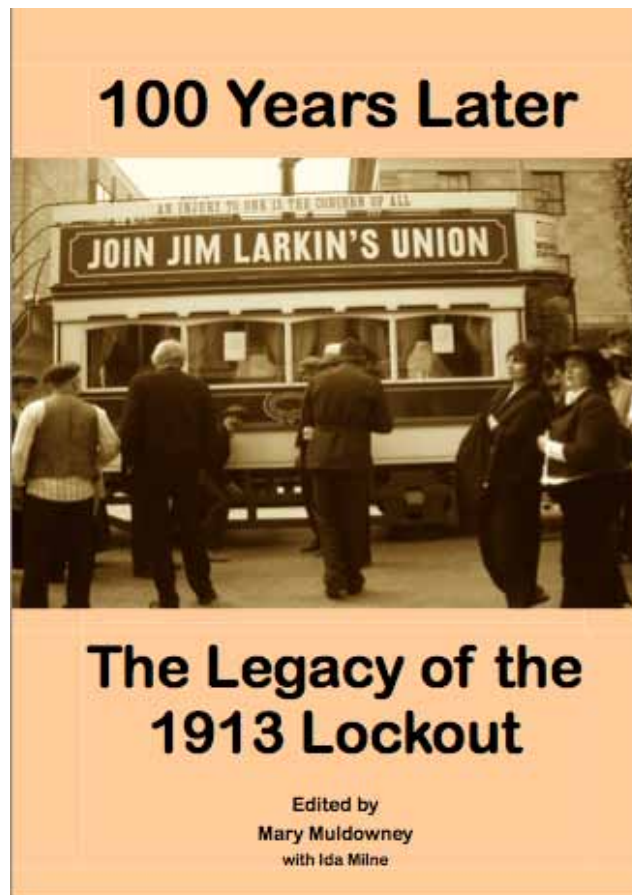
"The book doesn't just look at memories of 1913 – although it does that. It also explores its legacy and its effect on subsequent decades of trade unionism and trade union battles."

who today preach compromise and capitulation lauding the heroic stance taken by workers 100 years ago. But the commemorations also saw real and genuine remembrances of those struggles and a renewed commitment by many to take the lessons of those struggles and apply them to the problems facing us today.

This book falls very much into the latter category. It's a refreshing read, it brings memories of 100 years ago to life and its honesty and ease of access recommends it to all – whether you think you know everything there is to know about the time or whether you know very little about it.

The approach used and the style of presentation leaves this reader looking forward to this group of writers and publishers' exploration of other topics to do with our labour and folk history.

WORDS: GREGOR KERR



"100 Years Later: The Legacy of the 1913 Lockout", edited by Mary Muldowney and Ida Milne Available from seventowers.ie €12.99

"The family thought that James [Nolan] basically was a victim and a hero so they didn't have any, what would you say – they had no dispute with James Larkin. They fought, the way they fought, you know they were so hurt and basically for us. We were the ones who benefit from all the work they did at the time."

These are just a couple of examples of the many family and community memories that pepper the book.

Renewed commitment

The 1913 commemorations saw copious amounts of hypocrisy, with trade union leaders and politicians

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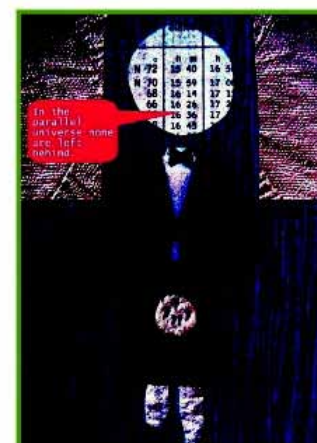


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